

Official Report of the
One Hundred Seventy-seventh
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 6 and 7, 2007

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Report of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 6, 2007, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 6 and 7, 2007. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 6, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Saturday and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday afternoon, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

General Authorities

First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and Henry B. Eyring

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, David A. Bednar, and Quentin L. Cook

Presidency of the Seventy: Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Neil L.

Andersen, Ronald A. Rasband, Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow, and Walter F. González

First Quorum of the Seventy: Carlos H. Amado, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Benjamín De Hoyos, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Christoffel Golden Jr., C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Ulisses Soares, Michael J. Teh, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

Second Quorum of the Seventy: Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Daryl H. Garn, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert C. Oaks, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Robert R. Steuer, Paul K. Sybrowsky, William R. Walker, and Robert S. Wood

Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 6, 2007. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst as the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang “Press Forward, Saints.” President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you to the first general session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presiden-

cies in attendance. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Church’s Internet site.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Press Forward, Saints” and will now favor us with “Faith of Our Fathers.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Faith of Our Fathers.”

Elder Gene R. Cook offered the invocation.

The Sustaining of Church Officers

President Gordon B. Hinckley

I will now present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote. Before doing so, I should like to take note of the recent passing of President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. He was an extremely able man, a man of great faith and capacity, who contributed much to our meetings. We greatly miss him. We extend our condolences to his beloved companion, Ruth, and their children.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Henry Bennion Eyring as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may do so.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K.

Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, David A. Bednar, and Quentin L. Cook. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any who may be opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please indicate. Contrary by the same sign.

We extend a release this morning to Elders Charles Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, Robert C. Oaks, and Quentin L. Cook as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

It is also proposed that we release Elders Merrill J. Bateman, Monte J. Brough, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, and W. Rolfe Kerr as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. All who wish to join in doing so may please indicate.

Elder Kerr will continue to serve as Commissioner of the Church Educational System.

We extend a release to Elders D. Rex Gerratt, Robert F. Orton, Wayne S. Peterson, R. Conrad Schultz, and H. Ross Workman as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join with us in expressing appreciation to these Brethren may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow,

and Walter F. González as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor may manifest it. And those opposed may so indicate.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued sustaining faith and prayers. We shall now ask President Eyring and Elders Cook and González to take their designated seats.

The choir will now sing “Come unto Him.” President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, will then address us. He will be followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric, after which we shall hear from Sister Mary N. Cook, second counselor in the general Young Women presidency. Following her remarks, Elder Enrique R. Falabella of the Seventy will address us.

The choir and congregation will then sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy will then address us. He will be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir sang “Come unto Him.”

President Boyd K. Packer

We honor President James E. Faust. We miss him. His beloved wife, Ruth, is with us this morning, and we express our love to her. We welcome those who have been named to the positions that President Hinckley has outlined.

Process for sustaining leaders is unique

Speaking for all of us who have been sustained today, we pledge to do our very best to be worthy of the trust placed in us.

We have sustained the general officers of the Church in a solemn, sacred

procedure. This common procedure occurs whenever leaders or teachers are called or released from office or whenever there is reorganization in a stake or a ward or a quorum or in the auxiliaries (see D&C 124:123, 144; see also D&C 20:65–67; 26:2). It is unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We always know who is called to lead or to teach and have the opportunity to sustain or to oppose the action. It did not come as an invention of man but was set out in the revelations: “It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and *it is known to the church* that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church” (D&C 42:11; italics added). In this way, the Church is protected from any imposter who would take over a quorum, a ward, a stake, or the Church.

The weak and simple of the Church

There is another principle unique to the Lord’s Church. All positions to teach and to lead are filled by members of the Church. This too has been set forth in the scriptures. One verse in the Doctrine and Covenants established the order of leadership in the Church for all time. It was unprecedented, certainly not the custom of Christian churches then or now:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; . . .

“The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, . . .

“ . . . That every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world;

“That faith also might increase in the earth;

“That mine everlasting covenant might be established;

“That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.

“Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding” (D&C 1:17, 19–24).

I am deeply grateful for those scriptures, which explain that the Lord will use the “weak things of the world.”

Each member is responsible to accept the call to serve.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said: “In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154). The Church has no professional clergy. Those called to leadership positions worldwide are drawn from the congregations. We have no seminaries for the training of professional leaders.

Everything that is done in the Church—the leading, the teaching, the calling, the ordaining, the praying, the singing, the preparation of the sacrament, the counseling, and everything else—is done by ordinary members, the “weak things of the world.”

An endless supply of leaders and teachers

We see in the Christian churches their struggle to fill the need for clergy. We do not have that problem. Once the gospel is preached and the Church is organized, there is an inexhaustible supply of faithful brothers and sisters who have that testimony and are willing to answer the call to serve. They commit themselves to the work of the Lord and live the standards required of them.

Members have had the Holy Ghost conferred upon them after their baptism (see D&C 33:15; 35:6). The Holy Ghost will teach and comfort them. They are then prepared to receive guidance, direction, and correction, whatever their position or needs require. (See John 14:26; D&C 50:14; 52:9; 75:10.)

This principle sets the Church on a different course from all other Christian churches in the world. We find ourselves in the unusual position of having an endless supply of teachers and leaders among every nation and kindred and tongue and people all over the world. There is a unique equality among members. No one of us is to consider himself of more value than the other (see D&C 38:24–25). “God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34–35; see also Romans 2:11; D&C 1:35; 38:16).

The greatest is the servant of all

When I was a young man, I was a home teacher to a very old sister. She taught me from her life experience.

When she was a little girl, President Brigham Young came to Brigham City, a great event in the town named after him. To honor him, the Primary children, all dressed in white, were lined up along the road coming into town, each with a basket of flowers to spread before the carriage of the President of the Church.

Something displeased her. Instead of throwing her blossoms, she kicked a rock in front of the carriage, saying, “He ain’t one bit better than my Grandpa Lovelund.” That was overheard, and she was severely scolded.

I am very sure that President Brigham Young would be the first to agree with little Janie Steed. He would not consider himself to be worth more than Grandpa Lovelund or any other worthy member of the Church.

The Lord Himself was very plain: “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:27). “The same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all” (D&C 50:26).

Years ago when I first received an appointment that resulted in my picture being in the newspapers, one of my high school teachers, evidently quite astonished, was heard to say, “That just proves that you can’t tell by looking at a frog how high he is going to jump!”

The image of that frog, sitting in the mud instead of jumping, illustrates how inadequate I have felt when facing the responsibilities that have come to me.

These feelings fix it so that thereafter one can never feel superior to anyone, not anyone.

Story of bearing testimony

For a long time something else puzzled me. Forty-six years ago I was a 37-year-old seminary supervisor. My Church calling was as an assistant teacher in a class in the Lindon Ward.

To my great surprise I was called to meet with President David O. McKay. He took both of my hands in his and called me to be one of the General Authorities, an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

A few days later I came to Salt Lake City to meet with the First Presidency to be set apart as one of the General Authorities of the Church. This was the first time I had met with the First Presidency—President David O. McKay and his counselors, President Hugh B. Brown and President Henry D. Moyle.

President McKay explained that one of the responsibilities of an Assistant to the Twelve was to stand with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as a special witness and to bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ. What he said next overwhelmed me: “Before we proceed to set

you apart, I ask you to bear your testimony to us. We want to know if you have that witness.”

I did the best I could. I bore my testimony the same as I might have in a fast and testimony meeting in my ward. To my surprise, the Brethren of the Presidency seemed pleased and proceeded to confer the office upon me.

That puzzled me greatly, for I had supposed that someone called to such an office would have an unusual, different, and greatly enlarged testimony and spiritual power.

It puzzled me for a long time until finally I could see that I already had what was required: an abiding testimony in my heart of the restoration of the fulness of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, that we have a Heavenly Father, and that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. I may not have known all about it, but I did have a testimony, and I was willing to learn.

The power of a simple testimony

I was perhaps no different from those spoken of in the Book of Mormon: “And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, *and they knew it not*” (3 Nephi 9:20; italics added).

Over the years I have come to see how powerfully important that simple testimony is. I have come to understand that our Heavenly Father is the Father of our spirits (see Numbers 16:22; Hebrews 12:9; D&C 93:29). He is a father with all the tender love of a father. Jesus said, “For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God” (John 16:27).

Some years ago I was with President Marion G. Romney, meeting with mission presidents and their wives in Geneva, Switzerland. He told them that 50 years before, as a missionary boy in Australia, late one afternoon he had gone to a library to study. When he walked out, it was night. He looked up into the starry sky, and it happened. The Spirit touched him, and a certain witness was born in his soul.

He told those mission presidents that he did not know any more surely then as a member of the First Presidency that God the Father lives; that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father; and that the fulness of the gospel had been restored than he did as a missionary boy 50 years before in Australia. He said that his testimony had changed in that it was much easier to get an answer from the Lord. The Lord’s presence was nearer, and he knew the Lord much better than he had 50 years before.

All callings are important

There is the natural tendency to look at those who are sustained to presiding positions, to consider them to be higher and of more value in the Church or to their families than an ordinary member. Somehow we feel they are worth more to the Lord than are we. It just does not work that way!

It would be very disappointing to my wife and to me if we supposed any one of our children would think that we think we are of more worth to the family or to the Church than they are, or to think that one calling in the Church was esteemed over another or that any calling would be thought to be less important.

Recently one of our sons was sustained as ward mission leader. His wife told us how thrilled he was with the call. It fits the very heavy demands of his work.

He has the missionary spirit and will find good use for his Spanish, which he has kept polished from his missionary days. We also were very, very pleased at his call.

What my son and his wife are doing with their little children transcends anything they could do in the Church or out. No service could be more important to the Lord than the devotion they give to one another and to their little children. And so it is with all our other children. The ultimate end of all activity in the Church centers in the home and the family.

Ordinary members carry the Church

As General Authorities of the Church, we are just the same as you are, and you are just the same as we are. You have the same access to the powers of revelation for your families and for your work and for your callings as we do.

It is also true that there is an order to things in the Church. When you are called to an office, you then receive revelation that belongs to that office that would not be given to others.

No member of the Church is esteemed by the Lord as more or less than any other. It just does not work that way! Remember, He is a father—our Father. The Lord is “no respecter of persons.”

We are not worth more to the onrolling of the Lord’s work than were Brother and Sister Toutai Paletu’a in Nuku’alofa, Tonga; or Brother and Sister Carlos Cifuentes in Santiago, Chile; or Brother and Sister Peter Dalebout in the Netherlands; or Brother and Sister Tatsui Sato of Japan; or hundreds of others I have met while traveling about the world. It just does not work that way.

And so the Church moves on. It is carried upon the shoulders of worthy members living ordinary lives among ordinary families, guided by the Holy Ghost and the Light of Christ, which is in them.

I bear witness that the gospel is true and that the worth of souls is great in the sight of God—every soul—and that we are blessed to be members of the Church. I have the witness that would qualify me for the calling I have. I’ve had it since I met the First Presidency those many years ago. I bear it to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

Ward members serve accident victims

A couple of years ago a humor columnist for a local newspaper wrote on a serious and thought-provoking subject. I quote from this article: “Being a go-to-church Mormon in Utah means living so close to fellow ward members that not much happens that the entire congregation doesn’t know about in five minutes tops.”

He continues: “This kind of cheek-to-jowl living can be intrusive. . . . It also happens to be one of our greatest strengths.”

The author goes on to say: “At work on Tuesday, I caught the noon news broadcast on television. A van had been obliterated in a traffic crash. A young mother and two small children were being rushed to emergency rooms by helicopter and ambulance. . . . Hours later I learned that the van belonged to the young couple living across the street from me in Herriman, Eric and Jeana Quigley.

“Not only do I see the Quigleys in church, . . . we ate dinner with them at a neighborhood party the night before the

crash. Our grandkids played with daughters Bianca and Miranda. . . .

“Fourteen-month-old Miranda suffered serious head injuries and died three days later at Primary Children’s Hospital.

“Here’s where all that nosiness . . . pays off.

“Although the accident occurred several miles from home, the dust literally had not settled before someone from the ward stopped and was pulling through the wreckage. The rest of the ward knew about it before the cops and paramedics showed up.

“Ward members went to all three hospitals, contacted Eric at work and organized into labor squads. People who didn’t get in on the immediate-need level were frantic for some way to help.

“In 48 hours, the Quigley yard was mowed, home cleaned, laundry done, refrigerator stocked, relatives fed and a trust fund set up at a local bank. We would have given their dog a bath if they had one.”

The author concludes with this insightful comment: “There is a positive side to the congregational microscope my ward lives under. . . . What happens to a few happens to all” (Robert Kirby, “Well-Being of Others Is Our Business,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 30, 2005, p. C1).

Wards are organized to minister

The compassion and service rendered by caring ward members as a result of this tragic accident are not unique to this particular incident. The Book of Mormon prophet Alma explained to prospective followers of Christ: “As ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort”—then, as Alma explained, they were prepared for baptism (see Mosiah

18:8–10). This scripture lays the foundation for ministering and caring in a most compassionate way.

The ward is organized to minister to the needs of those who face even the most difficult and heartbreaking trials. The bishop, often considered the “father” of the ward, is there to provide counsel and resources. But also close at hand are Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood leaders, the Relief Society presidency, home teachers, visiting teachers, and the ward members—always the ward members. All are there to administer comfort and show compassion in times of need.

Outpouring of love in times of tragedy

In my own immediate neighborhood we have had our share of heart-wrenching tragedies. In October 1998, 19-year-old Zac Newton, who lived only three houses east of us, was killed in a tragic automobile accident.

Less than two years later, in July, 19-year-old Andrea Richards, who lived directly across from the Newtons, was killed in an automobile accident.

One Saturday afternoon in July 2006, Travis Bastian, a 28-year-old returned missionary, and his 15-year-old sister, Desiree, who lived across the street and two houses north of us, were killed in a terrible automobile accident.

One month later, in August 2006, 32-year-old Eric Gold, who grew up in the house next door to us, suffered a premature death. And others in this neighborhood have also suffered heart-wrenching experiences privately endured and known only to themselves and God.

With the loss of five young people, one might assume that this is an unusual number of trials for one small neighborhood. I choose to think the number only seems large because of a close, caring ward, whose members know when there is a pressing need. It is a ward with members who are following the admonition

of Alma and the Savior—members who care and love and bear one another’s burdens, members who are willing to mourn with those that mourn, members who are willing to comfort those in need of comfort, members who endure together.

In each of these instances we saw an outpouring of love, service, and compassion that was inspirational to all. Bishops arrived, home and visiting teachers went into action, and Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies organized to take care of both spiritual and temporal needs. Refrigerators were stocked, houses cleaned, lawns mowed, shrubs trimmed, fences painted, blessings given, and soft shoulders were available for crying on. Members were everywhere.

Lessons learned from enduring together

In every one of these instances, the families who lost a loved one expressed increased faith, increased love for the Savior, increased gratitude for the Atonement, and heartfelt thankfulness for an organization that responds to the deepest emotional and spiritual needs of its members. These families now speak about how they got to know the Lord through their adversity. They relate many sweet experiences that grew out of their pain. They testify that blessings can emerge from heartbreak. They give praise to the Lord and would echo the words of Job: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

From bearing one another’s burdens as ward members, we have learned several lessons:

1. The Lord’s organization is fully adequate to *know* and *care for* those with even the most dire emotional and spiritual needs.

2. Adversity *can* bring us closer to God, with a renewed and enlightened appreciation for prayer and the Atonement, which covers pain and suffering in all their manifestations.

3. Members who suffer tragedy firsthand often experience increased capacity for love, compassion, and understanding. They become the first, last, and often the most effective responders in giving comfort and showing compassion to others.

4. A ward, as well as a family, draws closer together as it endures together—what happens to one happens to all.

5. And perhaps most important, we can each be more compassionate and caring because we have each had our own personal trials and experiences to draw from. We can endure together.

I rejoice in belonging to such a loving and caring organization. No one knows better how to bear one another’s burdens, mourn with those who mourn, and comfort those who stand in need of comfort. I choose to call it “enduring together.” What happens to one happens to all. We endure together.

May we be an instrument in lightening the burden of others, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Mary N. Cook

Youth should strengthen home and family

Each Sunday, from Mongolia to Manchester to Mississippi, the young women of the Church repeat these inspired words: “We will be prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred cov-

enants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation” (“Young Women Theme,” *Young Women Personal Progress* [booklet, 2001], 5).

While this is the Young Women theme, it applies to all youth in the Church. I hope I can help you, my young

brothers and sisters, to understand how powerful your individual actions can be in strengthening your home and family, no matter what your circumstances. I understand, for example, that many of you may be the only member of the Church in your family.

For the Strength of Youth reminds us that “being part of a family is a great blessing. . . . Not all families are the same, but each is important in Heavenly Father’s plan” ([pamphlet, 2001], 10).

All families need strengthening, from the ideal to the most troubled. That strengthening can come from *you*. In fact, in some families you may be the only source of spiritual strength. The Lord is depending on you to bring the blessings of the gospel to your family.

Four ways to strengthen your family

It is important to establish patterns of righteousness in your own life, which will enable you to set a good example for your family, whatever form your family may take.

The example of your righteous life will strengthen your family. President Hinckley gave the young women “a simple four-point program” in the general Young Women meeting last spring that will not only “assure your happiness” but will bless your family as well. He counseled each of us to “(1) pray, (2) study, (3) pay your tithing, and (4) attend your meetings” (“Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts Unceasingly,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 115).

Seeking the help of the Lord daily through prayer will bring great blessings to your family. Ask yourself: “Who in my family could benefit from my personal prayers?” “What could I do to support and encourage family prayer?”

As you personally study the scriptures, you will come to know the Savior and His teachings. From His example you will know how to love, serve, and forgive members of your family. Consider

how you could share your understanding of the scriptures with your family.

On several occasions President Hinckley has admonished us to “get all of the education you can” (*Ensign*, May 2007, 116). Your education will benefit your family now and will surely bless your future family. What can you do now to plan and prepare for a good education?

President Hinckley taught us, “While tithing is paid with money, more importantly it is paid with faith” (*Ensign*, May 2007, 117). Are you experiencing the blessings of paying tithing—with faith? As you obey this commandment, the Lord will “open . . . the windows of heaven” (Malachi 3:10) to bless you and your family.

How can attending your meetings—particularly sacrament meeting—bless you and your family? Regularly partaking of the sacrament will help you keep your baptismal covenant. As you live worthily and renew this covenant weekly, you will qualify for the guidance of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost will guide you and will teach you what you should do to bless your family.

Be an example of righteousness at home

As you commit to these patterns of righteousness, you will be blessed throughout your life and will develop the spiritual foundation from which you can strengthen your family by example. In 1 Timothy, Paul teaches us about example: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

The family section in *For the Strength of Youth* gives some great ways you can be “an example of the believers” in your own home:

“Be cheerful, helpful, and considerate of others. . . . Concern yourself with the needs of other family members. . . .

“Honor your parents by showing love and respect for them and by being obe-

dient. . . . Participate in family activities and traditions, including family prayer, family home evenings, and family scripture reading. These traditions strengthen and unify families. . . .

“Strengthen your relationships with your brothers and sisters. They can become your closest friends” (10–11).

Example is often the best teacher. Who in your family could benefit from your example—a brother, a sister, your mom or dad?

A missionary’s example blesses his family

Let me tell you an experience from my own life and how my brother’s patterns of righteousness and example resulted in our family being blessed eternally.

My brother and I were “born of goodly parents” (1 Nephi 1:1), who loved and made great sacrifices for the two of us, but our family had not been blessed with the sacred ordinances of the temple.

Many years ago on a day in late December, we received a letter from my brother, who was serving in the California North Mission. The outside of the envelope cautioned, “*Do not open until you are all together!!*”

As my father, mother, and I gathered to open his seven-page typewritten letter, we read his testimony of prayer. He taught us the doctrine of eternal families from the scriptures. We read his experiences of how fasting and prayer helped his investigators prepare to receive the ordinance of baptism. He assured us that our family too could be blessed through fasting and prayer. Then came his challenge:

“The bishop of the Stanford Ward spoke on a topic a couple of months ago which really hit home. . . . The bishop’s talk made me stop and realize the goals I want to accomplish in life. Uppermost in my mind is the goal I want to achieve with my own family . . . that, of course, being sealed to you, Mom and Dad, for

time and all eternity in the house of the Lord. I love you very much and want our family to be together in the eternities.”

Then his closing words: “May the Lord guide you in this important decision and may you pray together as a family is my prayer.”

As a teenager, I too had prayed for this blessing to come to my family. This letter now brought hope for my righteous desire.

The new year was an opportunity for our family to make some changes. In the many months that followed, we established family patterns of righteousness. We prayed together, studied about the ordinances of the temple, paid tithing, and attended our meetings regularly—as a family. Shortly after my brother returned from his mission, we were prepared to receive the ordinances of the temple. I knew the Lord had heard and answered our prayers as we surrounded the holy altar in the temple and were sealed as a family for time and all eternity.

Assist in the exaltation of your family

Can you make a difference in your family? Yes, you can! I often wonder about my family’s eternal progression if my brother had not written that powerful letter. His patterns of righteousness and example changed our lives.

Elder Robert D. Hales said: “If the example we have received from our parents was not good, it is our responsibility to break the cycle. . . . Each person can learn a better way and in so doing bless the lives of family members now and teach correct traditions for the generations that follow” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 10–11; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 10).

Remember, “the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Eternal families are made up

of individuals. “Do your part to build a happy home” (*For the Strength of Youth*, 10). Establish patterns of righteousness in your life. And be an example of the believers. The Lord is depending on you to assist in the exaltation of your eternal family.

I know that Jesus Christ lives. He knows you and loves you. He has blessed me and my family, and I know He will bless you and yours. Of this I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Enrique R. Falabella

Blessings of Church membership

The promise of eternal family relationships

Why are we members of the only true Church? Even though I cannot answer this question for all 13 million members of the Church, I would like to express from my heart some answers that probably will fit with your own answers.

“Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich” (D&C 6:7).

Riches were not a part of my childhood. We were a family of five: my father and four siblings. My mother had passed away when I was five years old. My father’s meager income was used to buy our food; the purchase of clothing was put off as long as possible.

One day, somewhat bothered, I came up to my father and said, “Daddy, why don’t you buy me some shoes? Look at these; they’re worn out, and you can see my big toe through the hole in the shoe.”

“We’ll fix that up,” he replied and, with some black polish, gave a shine to my shoes. Later on he told me, “Son, it’s fixed up.”

“No,” I answered, “you can still see my big toe.”

“That can also be fixed,” he told me. He again took the polish and put some on my toe, and before long it shined like my shoes. So it was early on in life I learned that happiness does not depend on money.

As time went by, a pair of missionaries taught us the *riches* of the restored

gospel, of the doctrine of the plan of salvation, and of eternal families. We were baptized, and when my father began his calling as district president, his first objective was to journey to the temple and receive the blessings which would come because of that sacrifice. It was a 15-day journey covering 4,800 miles—a journey filled with difficulties and setbacks, highways in poor condition, uncomfortable buses, not even knowing the route, but with great hope in the ordinances we would participate in.

Upon arriving in the city of Mesa, Arizona, we headed down an avenue at the end of which we could see the house of the Lord, gleaming and beautiful. I remember the joy which filled our hearts; we all broke out in songs and praising, and tears ran down the cheeks of many Saints.

Later in the temple we knelt as a family to hear the beautiful promises about an eternal family, with the certainty that our mother, though absent, was now our mother forever, and we felt the peace which comes from knowing that we are an eternal family.

The promise of life eternal thus gave us the riches of eternity! “Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich” (D&C 6:7).

The power of the restored priesthood

The Church of Jesus Christ is a church of priests, “a royal priesthood, an holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9).

The restored Church gives to each home a priesthood holder with the power of God to bless. How many times I have been able to hear the soft, sweet voice of a little child at home say, "Daddy, could you give me a blessing?" and put my hands upon his or her head in moments of pain and difficulty and pronounce blessings of comfort and healing and see the power of the priesthood exercise its influence and the next day hear that little voice say, "Thanks, Daddy, I slept just fine last night." We don't need to go out looking for someone having that power—it is among us! What a blessing to be able to teach this principle to our children! This is the only church upon the earth which offers such a blessing to families.

Through this power I was able to ordain each of my sons to the priesthood and thus give them the power of God to administer His ordinances.

So then this is also why I am a member of this Church: because the power of the priesthood is again upon the earth and has reached even unto our homes.

A testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ

The most valuable power we can possess is the treasure of a personal testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning power.

A testimony comes to us as we live a worthy life and seek it in prayer. "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith" (D&C 42:14), our Lord counseled through the Prophet Joseph.

When my son Daniel was six years old, he saw that I was worried because I had to attend a stake conference. I was unsure about what to teach the Saints. He came up to me and said, "Daddy, that's really easy." That's how children see everything.

"Let's see, Son," I told him. "Since it's easy, tell me what I can talk to them about."

"Talk to them about prayer," he told me.

"That's a good subject," I said, "but they've heard a lot of talk about prayer; what could I tell them that's new?"

"That's easy too, Daddy. First tell them, 'Before you start to talk to Heavenly Father, think about the things you want to tell Him.'"

"That sounds like a magnificent idea," I replied. "And then?"

"Well, once you've thought of it, tell it to Him! When you finish, wait and see if He has something to tell you."

So, through our prayers, the Spirit speaks to our spirit and testifies to us of the reality of our Savior.

I am filled with wonder at the love my Savior Jesus Christ showed by descending from the heavenly mansions and coming to a world where the majority rejected His message, and even though they did not have the power to take His life, they condemned Him to death. Christ paid for my sins, for my illnesses, afflictions, and sorrows. His pain was indescribable; Luke only makes mention that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood" (Luke 22:44).

Above all else, this is the reason for my membership in the Church: because the Holy Spirit has penetrated my heart and has made it known to me that Christ lives, that He is my Savior, that He paid for my sins, and that He has prepared the way so that if I live according to His precepts, I can enjoy all other promised blessings.

A few weeks ago my father also passed away, and now more than ever I feel thankfulness to my God for the richness and beauty of His doctrine.

Because family life can continue beyond the thresholds of death. Because the royal priesthood has been restored upon the earth. And because the Spirit has spoken to my spirit, giving me a testimony that my Savior Jesus Christ lives

and that through His intercession I shall be able, in accordance to my faithfulness, to live with Him. For these reasons and others still, I am a member of the only true Church upon the face of the earth,

and I shall be eternally grateful for this. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

Elder Spencer J. Condie

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

I bring you the love and greeting of the faithful Saints in the South Pacific.

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes faith in His divine birth and heavenly heritage and faith that, under His Father's direction, He created the earth and all things that dwell therein (see John 1:10; Mosiah 3:8). At the very heart of our faith in Christ is the assurance that through His atoning sacrifice, though our sins may be as scarlet, they can become as white as snow (see Isaiah 1:18).

Faith in Christ includes the knowledge that following His Crucifixion, He arose from the tomb, and His Resurrection made it possible for all mankind to live again (see 1 Corinthians 15:21–23). Faith in Christ is the assurance that He and His Heavenly Father appeared to a young man, Joseph Smith, paving the way for the restoration of all things in the dispensation of the fulness of times. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, which bears His holy name.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is evident when we believe His teachings and claim His “exceeding great and precious promises” and become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Innumerable promises are proclaimed by His prophets, and the Lord assures us, “My word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

In these latter days the Lord revealed that “when we obtain any blessing from

God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21). The Lord makes generous promises, and He certifies that He will not vary from these promises, for, said He, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).

Exceeding great and precious promises

The Lord's countless exceeding great and precious promises include forgiveness of our sins when we “confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43; see also D&C 1:32). Opening the windows of heaven is a promise claimed by those who pay a faithful tithe (see Malachi 3:10), and finding “great treasures of knowledge” accrues to those who observe the Word of Wisdom (D&C 89:19).

Becoming unspotted from the world is a promise to those who keep the Sabbath holy (see D&C 59:9; Exodus 31:13). Divine guidance and inspiration are promised to those who “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3) and who “liken all scriptures” unto themselves (1 Nephi 19:23).

The Lord also promised that “whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you” (3 Nephi 18:20). We are promised that the Holy Ghost will be our constant companion when we “let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly” (see D&C 121:45–46). We can claim the spiritually liberating promise of fasting, which will “loose the bands of wickedness,” undo our “heavy

burdens,” and “break every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6).

Those who are sealed in holy temples and who faithfully keep their covenants will receive God’s glory, which “shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19).

Sometimes, in our earthly impatience, we may lose sight of the Lord’s precious promises and disconnect our obedience from the fulfillment of these promises. The Lord has declared:

“Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled?

“I command and men obey not; I re-voke and they receive not the blessing.

“Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above” (D&C 58:31–33).

Seeing the promises afar off

Important components of faith are patience, long-suffering, and enduring to the end. The Apostle Paul recounts the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, concluding that “these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (see Hebrews 11:4–13). These faithful Saints knew that this earth life was a journey, not their final destination.

When Abram was 75 years old, the Lord promised him, “I will make of thee a great nation”—this at a time when he and Sarai as yet had no children (Genesis 12:2). He was 86 when Sarai’s handmaiden Hagar “bare Ishmael to Abram” (Genesis 16:16).

And the Lord changed Abram’s name to Abraham and Sarai’s name to Sarah, and when he was nearly 100 and she was 90, they were promised that Sarah would bear a son to be named Isaac (see Genesis 17:17, 19). Amidst their disbelief the

Lord asked, “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14). And “Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age” (Genesis 21:2), and the Lord promised: “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Genesis 22:17).

Young Isaac grew into manhood, and when he was 40 years old he married Rebekah. “And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived” and bore twin sons, Esau and Jacob, when their father was 60 years old. (See Genesis 25:20–26.)

As Jacob matured and became of appropriate age, his parents sent him to the household of Laban, where he would meet Laban’s two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Jacob told Laban, “I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. . . . And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her” (Genesis 29:18, 20).

You will recall how Laban beguiled young Jacob into first marrying Leah and then Rachel. “And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren” (Genesis 29:31). And Leah bore Reuben, then Simeon, then Levi, and Judah. Meanwhile, Rachel remained childless (see Genesis 29:32–35).

With ever-increasing envy and mounting desperation, one day Rachel explosively demanded of Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die” (Genesis 30:1). Leah subsequently bore two more sons and a daughter.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promises

The Apostle Peter testified that “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering” toward us (2 Peter 3:9). In this age of one-hour dry cleaning and one-minute fast-food franchises, it may at

times seem to us as though a loving Heavenly Father has misplaced our precious promises or He has put them on hold or filed them under the wrong name. Such were the feelings of Rachel.

But with the passage of time, we encounter four of the most beautiful words in holy writ: “And God remembered Rachel” (Genesis 30:22). And she was blessed with the birth of Joseph and later the birth of Benjamin. There are millions on earth today who are descendants of Joseph who have embraced the Abra-

hamic promise that through their efforts “shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:11).

When heaven’s promises sometimes seem afar off, I pray that each of us will embrace these exceeding great and precious promises and never let go. And just as God remembered Rachel, God will remember you. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Have we not reason to rejoice?

I still rejoice in the wonderful spirit we felt as we sang together this morning:

Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation.

No longer as strangers on earth need we roam.

Good tidings are sounding to us and each nation.

[“Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3]

These words by Brother William W. Phelps are quite a contrast to the world’s tendency to focus on bad news. It is true, we live in a time foretold in the scriptures as a day of “wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places” (Mormon 8:30), when “the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them” (D&C 45:26).

But how does this affect us as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Are we living with apprehension, fear, and worry? Or have we, amidst all of our challenges, not *reason to rejoice*?

Family finds the gospel in time of despair

We all go through different life experiences. Some are filled with joy and others with sorrow and uncertainty.

I remember a time when things didn’t look good for our family when I was a child. It was in the winter of 1944, one of the coldest during World War II. The war front was approaching our town, and my mother had to take us four children, leave all our possessions behind, and join the millions of fleeing refugees in a desperate search for a place to survive. Our father was still in the military, but he and Mother had agreed that if they were ever separated during the war, they would try to reunite at the hometown of my grandparents. They felt this place offered the greatest hope for shelter and safety.

With bombing raids during the night and air attacks during the day, it took us many days to reach my grandparents. My memories of those days are of darkness and coldness.

My father returned to us unharmed, but our future looked extremely bleak. We were living in the rubble of postwar Germany with a devastating feeling of hopelessness and darkness about our future.

In the middle of this despair, my family learned about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the healing message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This message made all the difference; it lifted us above our daily

misery. Life was still thorny and the circumstances still horrible, but the gospel brought light, hope, and joy into our lives. The plain and simple truths of the gospel warmed our hearts and enlightened our minds. They helped us look at ourselves and the world around us with different eyes and from an elevated viewpoint.

The gospel can lift us to great heights

My dear brothers and sisters, aren't the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and our membership in His Church great reasons to rejoice?

Wherever you live on this earth and whatever your life's situation may be, I testify to you that the gospel of Jesus Christ has the divine power to lift you to great heights from what appears at times to be an unbearable burden or weakness. The Lord knows your circumstances and your challenges. He said to Paul and to all of us, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And like Paul we can answer: "My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we may claim the blessings promised in the covenants and the ordinances we received when we accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news, glad tidings, and much more. It is the message of salvation as repeatedly announced by Jesus Christ and His apostles and prophets. It is my firm belief that all truth and light originating with God is embraced in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God, our loving Father in Heaven, has said that it is His work and glory "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). God the Father is the author of the gospel; it is a key part of God's plan of salvation, or

plan of redemption. It is called the gospel of Jesus Christ because it is the Atonement of Jesus Christ that makes redemption and salvation possible. Through the Atonement all men, women, and children are unconditionally redeemed from physical death, and all will be redeemed from their own sins on the condition of accepting and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ (see D&C 20:17–25; 76:40–42, 50–53; Moses 6:62).

Christ's gospel is the only true gospel, and "there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ" (Mosiah 3:17; see also Acts 4:12).

The core elements of the gospel message are found in all the holy scriptures but are most clearly given to us in the Book of Mormon and in the revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Here Jesus Himself plainly declares His doctrine and His gospel, with which God's children must comply to "have eternal life" (D&C 14:7; see also 3 Nephi 11:31–39; 27:13–21; D&C 33:11–12).

The gospel is clear and plain. It answers the most complex questions in life, yet even a young child can comprehend and apply it. As Nephi said:

"My soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding" (2 Nephi 31:3).

The first principles and ordinances of the gospel

The Prophet Joseph Smith followed the same pattern of clarity and plainness when he explained to the world in a very concise way "the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel" (Articles of Faith 1:4), which we must accept to receive the eternal blessings of the gospel:

First, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—believing in the Redeemer, the Son of God, “with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” and then “[pressing] forward with a steadfastness in Christ, . . . feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:19–20).

Second, repentance, which includes a change of mind, offering up “a sacrifice [of] a broken heart and a contrite spirit”; giving up sin and becoming meek and humble “as a little child” (3 Nephi 9:20, 22).

Third, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and as a covenant to keep the commandments of God and take upon us the name of Christ.

Fourth, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, also known as baptism by fire, which sanctifies us and makes us “new creatures,” born of God (Mosiah 27:26; see also 1 Peter 1:23).

The gift of the Holy Ghost, given to us by our Heavenly Father and administered by one having authority, includes the merciful promise: “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5). Through the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, every member of the Church can receive “the words of Christ” directly (2 Nephi 32:3), at any time or place. This personal divine guidance helps us to remain valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ and endure to the end of our days. Isn’t this wonderful!

Have we not reason to rejoice?

What does it mean to endure to the end?

The scriptures teach us that once we have received the ordinances of baptism and confirmation, our task then is to “endure to the end” (2 Nephi 31:20).

When I was a young boy, “endure to the end” meant to me mainly that I had to try harder to stay awake until the end

of our Church meetings. Later as a teenager I progressed only slightly in my understanding of this scriptural phrase. I linked it with youthful empathy to the efforts of our dear elderly members to hang in there until the end of their lives.

Enduring to the end, or remaining faithful to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout our life, is a fundamental requirement for salvation in the kingdom of God. This belief distinguishes Latter-day Saints from many other Christian denominations that teach that salvation is given to all who simply believe and confess that Jesus is the Christ. The Lord clearly declared, “If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

Enduring is an active process

Therefore, enduring to the end is not just a matter of passively tolerating life’s difficult circumstances or “hanging in there.” Ours is an active religion, helping God’s children along the strait and narrow path to develop their full potential during this life and return to Him one day. Viewed from this perspective, enduring to the end is exalting and glorious, not grim and gloomy. This is a joyful religion, one of hope, strength, and deliverance. “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

Enduring to the end is a process filling every minute of our life, every hour, every day, from sunrise to sunrise. It is accomplished through personal discipline following the commandments of God.

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ is a way of life. It is not for Sunday only. It is not something we can do only as a habit or a tradition if we expect to harvest all of its promised blessings. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for what-

soever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Enduring to the end implies "patient continuance in well doing" (Romans 2:7), striving to keep the commandments (see 2 Nephi 31:10), and doing the works of righteousness (see D&C 59:23). It requires sacrifice and hard work. To endure to the end, we need to trust our Father in Heaven and make wise choices, including paying our tithes and offerings, honoring our temple covenants, and serving the Lord and one another willingly and faithfully in our Church callings and responsibilities. It means strength of character, selflessness, and humility; it means integrity and honesty to the Lord and our fellowmen. It means making our homes strong places of defense and a refuge against worldly evils; it means loving and honoring our spouses and children.

As we do our best to endure to the end, a beautiful refinement will come into our lives. We will learn to "do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us]" (Matthew 5:44). The blessings that come to us from enduring to the end in this life are real and very significant, and for the life to come they are beyond our comprehension.

Jesus Christ wants you to succeed

My dear brothers and sisters, there will be days and nights when you feel overwhelmed, when your hearts are heavy and your heads hang down. Then, please remember, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, is the Head of this Church. It is His gospel. He wants you to succeed. He gave His life for just this purpose. He is the Son of the living God. He has promised:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

"For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee" (3 Nephi 22:10). "I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (3 Nephi 22:8).

My dear friends, the Savior heals the broken heart and binds up your wounds (see Psalm 147:3). Whatever your challenges may be, wherever you live on this earth, your faithful membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the divine powers of the gospel of Jesus Christ will bless you to endure joyfully to the end.

Of this I bear witness with all my heart and mind in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

President Hinckley

The choir has just sung "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" We're deeply grateful to the choir for the beautiful music they have presented this morning.

Our concluding speaker for this session will be President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the Presidency. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "I Believe in Christ." The music for this hymn was written by Brother John Longhurst, who has served as Tabernacle organist for the past 30 years. Brother Longhurst will retire at the end of this year. We thank him for his many years of devoted service to the Church.

After the music, the benediction will be offered by Elder David F. Evans of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

I miss my colleague James E. Faust today and express my love to his dear wife and family and am assured he is serving the Lord elsewhere. I welcome the newly sustained General Authorities, President Eyring, Elder Cook, and Elder González, and assure them they have my full support.

Mrs. Patton—the story continues

Thirty-eight years ago, at a general conference held in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, I spoke of one of my childhood friends, Arthur Patton, who died at a young age. The talk was titled “Mrs. Patton, Arthur Lives.”¹ I addressed my remarks to Arthur’s mother, Mrs. Patton, who was not a member of the Church. Although I had little hope that Mrs. Patton would actually hear my talk, I wanted to share with all who were within the sound of my voice the glorious gospel message of hope and love. Recently I have felt impressed to refer once again to Arthur and to relate to you what transpired following my original message.

First may I tell you about Arthur. He had blond, curly hair and a smile as big as all outdoors. He stood taller than any boy in the class. I suppose this is how, in 1940, as the great conflict which became World War II was overtaking much of Europe, Arthur was able to fool the recruiting officers and enlist in the navy at the tender age of 15. To Arthur and most of the boys, the war was a great adventure. I remember how striking he appeared in his navy uniform. How we wished we were older or at least taller so we too could enlist.

Youth is a very special time of life. As Longfellow wrote:

How beautiful is youth! how bright it gleams
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!
Book of Beginnings, Story without End,

Each maid a heroine, and each man a friend!²

Arthur’s mother was so proud of the blue star which graced her living room window. It represented to every passerby that her son wore the uniform of his country and was actively serving. When I would pass the house, she often opened the door and invited me in to read the latest letter from Arthur. Her eyes would fill with tears; I would then be asked to read aloud. Arthur meant everything to his widowed mother.

I can still picture Mrs. Patton’s coarse hands as she would carefully replace the letter in its envelope. These were hard-working hands; Mrs. Patton was a cleaning woman for a downtown office building. Each day of her life except Sundays she could be seen walking along the sidewalk, pail and brush in hand, her gray hair pulled back into a tight bob, her shoulders weary from work and stooped with age.

Comforting Mrs. Patton

In March 1944, with the war now raging, Arthur was transferred from the USS *Dorsey*, a destroyer, to the USS *White Plains*, an aircraft carrier. While at Saipan in the South Pacific, the ship was attacked. Arthur was one of those on board who was lost at sea.

The blue star was taken from its hallowed spot in the front window of the Patton home. It was replaced by one of gold, indicating that he whom the blue star represented had been killed in battle. A light went out in the life of Mrs. Patton. She groped in utter darkness and deep despair.

With a prayer in my heart, I approached the familiar walkway to the Patton home, wondering what words of comfort could come from the lips of a mere boy.

The door opened, and Mrs. Patton embraced me as she would her own son. Home became a chapel as a grief-stricken mother and a less-than-adequate boy knelt in prayer.

As we arose from our knees, Mrs. Patton gazed into my eyes and spoke: "Tommy, I belong to no church, but you do. Tell me, will Arthur live again?" To the best of my ability, I testified to her that Arthur would indeed live again.

Understanding the purpose of mortality

In general conference those long years ago, as I related this account, I mentioned that I had lost track of Mrs. Patton but that I wanted to once more answer her question "Will Arthur live again?"

I referred to the Savior of the world, who walked the dusty paths of villages we now reverently call the Holy Land; who caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the dead to live; to Him who tenderly and lovingly assured us, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."³

I explained that the plan of life and an explanation of its eternal course come to us from the Master of heaven and earth, even Jesus Christ the Lord. To understand the meaning of death, we must appreciate the purpose of life.

I indicated that in this dispensation the Lord declared: "And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn."⁴ "Man was also in the beginning with God."⁵

Jeremiah the prophet recorded: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee . . . I knew thee; and before thou camest forth . . . I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."⁶

From that majestic world of spirits we enter the grand stage of life to prove ourselves obedient to all things commanded of God. During mortality we grow from helpless infancy to inquiring

childhood and then to reflective maturity. We experience joy and sorrow, fulfillment and disappointment, success and failure. We taste the sweet, yet sample the bitter. This is mortality.

Through Christ, all will live again

Then to each life comes the experience known as death. None is exempt. All must pass its portals.

To most, there is something sinister and mysterious about this unwelcome visitor called death. Perhaps it is a fear of the unknown which causes many to dread its coming.

Arthur Patton died quickly. Others linger. We know, through the revealed word of God, that "the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, . . . are taken home to that God who gave them life."⁷

I assured Mrs. Patton and all others who were listening that God would never forsake them—that He sent His Only Begotten Son into the world to teach us by example the life we should live. His Son died upon the cross to redeem all mankind. His words to the grieving Martha and to His disciples today bring comfort to us:

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."⁸

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

". . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."⁹

I reiterated the testimonies of John the Revelator and Paul the Apostle. John recorded:

"I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; . . .

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it."¹⁰

Paul declared, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."¹¹

I explained that until the glorious Resurrection morning, we walk by faith. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."¹²

Jesus comforts and sustains us

I reassured Mrs. Patton that Jesus invited her and all others:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."¹³

As part of my message, I explained to Mrs. Patton that such knowledge would sustain her in her heartache—that she would never be in the tragic situation of the disbeliever who, having lost a son, was heard to say as she watched the casket lowered into mother earth, "Good-bye, my boy. Good-bye forever." Rather, with head erect, courage undaunted, and faith unwavering, she could lift her eyes as she looked beyond the gently breaking waves of the blue Pacific and whisper, "Good-bye, Arthur, my precious son. Good-bye—until we meet again."

I quoted the words of Tennyson, as though spoken to her by Arthur:

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the
bar,
When I put out to sea, . . .
Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time
and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.¹⁴

As I concluded my message those long years ago, I expressed to Mrs. Patton my personal testimony as a special witness, telling her that God our Father was mindful of her—that through sincere prayer she could communicate with Him; that He too had a Son who died, even Jesus Christ the Lord; that Christ is our advocate with the Father, the Prince of Peace, our Savior and divine Redeemer; and that one day we would see Him face-to-face.

A letter of gratitude from Mrs. Patton

I hoped that my message to Mrs. Patton would reach and touch others who had lost a loved one.

And now, my brothers and sisters, I share with you the rest of this account. I delivered my message on April 6, 1969. Again, I had little or no hope that Mrs. Patton would actually hear the talk. I had no reason to think she would listen to general conference. As I have mentioned, she was not a member of the Church. And then I learned that something akin to a miracle had taken place. Having no idea whatsoever who would be speaking at conference or what subjects they might speak about, Latter-day Saint neighbors of Mrs. Terese Patton in California, where she had moved, invited her to their home to listen to a session of conference with them. She accepted their invitation and thus was listening to the very session where I directed my remarks to her personally.

During the first week of May 1969, to my astonishment and joy, I received a letter postmarked Pomona, California, and dated April 29, 1969. It was from Mrs. Terese Patton. I share with you a part of that letter:

"Dear Tommy,

"I hope you don't mind my calling you Tommy, as I always think of you that way. I don't know how to thank you for the comforting talk you gave.

“Arthur was 15 years old when he enlisted in the navy. He was killed one month before his 19th birthday on July 5, 1944.

“It was wonderful of you to think of us. I don’t know how to thank you for your comforting words, both when Arthur died and again in your talk. I have had many questions over the years, and you have answered them. I am now at peace concerning Arthur. . . . God bless and keep you always.

“Love,

“Terese Patton”¹⁵

God loves and hears each of us

My brothers and sisters, I do not believe it was a coincidence that I was impressed to give that particular message at the April 1969 general conference. Nor do I believe it was a coincidence that Mrs. Terese Patton was invited by neighbors to join them in their home for that particular session of conference. I am certain our Heavenly Father was mindful of her needs and wanted her to hear the comforting truths of the gospel.

Although Mrs. Patton has long since left mortality, I have felt a strong impression to share with you the manner in which our Heavenly Father blessed and provided for her, a widow, in her need. With all the strength of my soul I testify that our Heavenly Father loves each one of us. He hears the prayers of humble hearts; He hears our cries for help, as He heard Mrs. Patton. His Son, our Savior

and Redeemer, speaks to each of us today: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.”¹⁶

Will we listen for that knock? Will we hear that voice? Will we open that door to the Lord, that we may receive the help He is so ready to provide? I pray that we will, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 126–29.
2. “Morituri Salutamus,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (1883), 259.
3. John 14:6.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 93:21.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 93:29.
6. Jeremiah 1:4–5.
7. Alma 40:11.
8. John 11:25–26.
9. John 14:2–3.
10. Revelation 20:12–13.
11. 1 Corinthians 15:22.
12. 1 Corinthians 13:12.
13. Matthew 11:28–29.
14. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Crossing the Bar,” in *Poems of the English Race*, ed. Raymond Macdonald Alden (1921), 362.
15. Personal correspondence in the possession of Thomas S. Monson.
16. Revelation 3:20.

The choir sang “I Believe in Christ.” Elder David F. Evans offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 177th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 6, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A Young Women choir from stakes in Mapleton and Springville, Utah, provided the music. Manu Harris directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend greetings to all who are in attendance and who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a Young Women choir from stakes in Mapleton and Springville, Utah, under the direction of Sister Manu Harris, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Come, Rejoice.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Come, Rejoice.”

Elder Kenneth Johnson offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer.”

President Monson

“Oh, how lovely was the morning.” Beautifully rendered.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders M. Russell Ballard and Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elders Bruce D. Porter and Erich W. Kopischke of the Seventy.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Answering questions about the Church

Brothers and sisters, since the sesqui-centennial anniversary in 1997, there has been a dramatic increase worldwide in inquiries about the Church. This growing interest is fueled by our rapid growth, by events like the Winter Olympics here in Salt Lake City, and by the prominence in their chosen professions of many of our individual members.

I am sure that these questions come not only to the Church but to you as individual members. It is not easy to explain something as vast as the Church or as wonderful as the restored gospel to people who know little or nothing about us. Even questions on one specific aspect can be difficult to answer because every question seems to be connected to other questions. The most common request we hear is a fairly simple one that goes some-

thing like this: “Tell me a little about your Church.” The key word here is *little*. They are not saying, “Tell me everything you know and then send others to tell me everything else.”

We, of course, welcome people’s interest, and many will want to be taught more about our doctrines and beliefs. This is why we have over 53,000 full-time missionaries serving at their own expense throughout the world.

But we need to remember that there is a difference between interest and mere curiosity. Sometimes people just want to know what the Church is. Those who are curious in this general way deserve clear and accurate information that comes directly from those of us who are members so that they do not have to rely on the incomplete answers, half-truths, or false statements that may come from the media or other outside voices. The many

misunderstandings and false information about the Church are somewhat our own fault for not clearly explaining who we are and what we believe.

The Public Affairs Committee, on which I serve, has learned that there is a great need for clear, simple statements that present those who are curious with the basics about the Church as it is today. Let me share with you some of the things we have found to be helpful. You may want to prepare your own list of talking points that will assist you in explaining what we believe to your friends and acquaintances of other faiths. It may be helpful for you, as it is for me, to have on one page a few facts about the Church as it is today to give to them along with a copy of the Articles of Faith.

Facts, faith, family, and fruits

Here are four subjects that will help someone today to gain a basic understanding of the Church. Under each of the four headings, there are some simple statements I have found helpful. Try to imagine them being heard or read by a person who knows virtually nothing about us. The four main subjects deal with *facts*, *faith*, *families*, and *fruits* of the restored gospel.

Facts

Some *facts* might include:

- First, *Mormon* is a nickname for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members are often referred to as *Mormons*, *Latter-day Saints*, or *LDS*. The term *Saint* means “member.”

- Second, the Church was restored in 1830 in upstate New York with Joseph Smith as its first prophet and president. Today it is headquartered in Salt Lake City, with President Gordon B. Hinckley as the present prophet.

- Third, there are now over 13 million members in 176 countries and territories. About 6 million of these are in the

United States, making us the fourth largest Christian denomination in America. As one of the fastest growing Christian faiths in the world, we complete a new chapel every working day. Members pay a tithe, which is 10 percent of their income, making this and other programs possible.

- Fourth, local congregations are led by volunteer, unpaid members. Both men and women serve in assigned leadership positions.

- And fifth, Mormons are well represented in politics and government. (In the United States, for example, there are 16 members in Congress, from both political parties.) Members also serve in high and trusted positions throughout the world in business, medicine, law, education, media, sports, and entertainment.

Faith

Next, people need to know something of our *faith* as committed Christians with strong traditional values. Along with the Articles of Faith we need to emphasize that:

- We believe in the eternity of the soul, that God is the Father of our spirits, and that we can return to Him after death.

- We believe that Jesus Christ is our personal Savior, and we try to model our lives after Him and His teachings. We commemorate Christ’s atoning sacrifice in our Sunday worship services, similar to taking communion in other churches. We accept as fellow Christians all who believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and the Savior of all mankind. Many Christians do not understand that we have much common ground with them. Joseph Smith taught that Jesus Christ is the core of our belief, and everything else is an appendage to it (see *Elders’ Journal*, July 1838, 44). The name of the Church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

- We believe the original church that Jesus established was lost and has been restored again in our day. The priesthood—the authority given to man to act in the name of God, with apostles and a prophet to lead us—has been restored, as have all necessary ordinances of salvation.

- We believe in and we use the Holy Bible, both the Old and New Testaments.

- And we believe in the Book of Mormon and other books of scripture which support and authenticate the Bible and testify of the ministry and divinity of Christ and of God's ongoing revelation to man. Indeed, the Book of Mormon is "Another Testament of Jesus Christ."

Family

The next thing it is good for people to know is how *family* centered our theology and our lifestyles are. Once again, simple statements are helpful to someone who is uninformed but curious about the importance we place on families.

- Mormons place particularly strong emphasis on family as the basic unit of the Church and of society. We have a deep commitment to marriage, defined as a union between one man and one woman. Polygamy, a limited practice in the early pioneer days of the Church, was discontinued in 1890, some 117 years ago.

- Families and individuals, whether members of our faith or not, can attend Sunday services in our chapels. Here we worship together, instructing one another from the scriptures.

- Latter-day Saint families are encouraged to hold family home evenings weekly, usually on Monday nights. This provides a regular and predictable time for parents to teach values to their children and to have fun together. We invite those not of our faith to adopt this practice with their own families.

- The Church has auxiliary programs for women, youth, and children as a support to the family. These programs provide such things as religious instruction

and opportunities for Christian service, sports, drama, music, and Scouting.

- And there is also much focus on extended family, genealogy, and personal family history, providing young and old with a stronger sense of roots, identity, and belonging. The highest and most sacred ordinances of our faith relate to our families, both living and dead, and some of these ordinances take place in our temples.

Fruits

Now, even as someone begins to understand a few facts about us and comes to know us more accurately by our faith and the importance of family, it was the Savior who said, "By their *fruits* ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20; italics added). A church, or any way of life, should be judged by the fruits or the results that it generates. Here are a few examples based on United States statistics. These would be similar throughout the world among practicing Mormons, by which we mean those who attend church and the temple regularly:

- One of the fruits is a longer life. Studies show that practicing Mormons are healthier and therefore live longer than the national average. In 1833 the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith the Word of Wisdom, which is the way to live in order to enjoy a long and healthy life.

- Second, those who are married in and attend the temple regularly have a divorce rate far below the national and world average.

- Third, we achieve an educational level that is higher than the national average.

- Fourth, over 70,000 members volunteer at their own expense to serve for 18 to 24 months in humanitarian efforts, Church-service assignments, and full-time missionary service throughout the world.

- And fifth, we place strong emphasis on self-reliance and a solid work ethic. We encourage active involvement in our

communities and in providing service to others. The Church continues to donate substantial money, goods, and services to humanitarian causes around the globe, including untold hours of labor donated by members to assist in disaster cleanup and relief.

Reach out and tell others who we are

Brothers and sisters, in today's busy world, I have found that most people will not read or focus on more than just a few important facts at one time. Whatever you choose to use to inform your friends and acquaintances about the Church, write it down, check it for accuracy, and keep it simple and short.

The growing prominence of the Church and the increasing inquiries from others present us with great opportunities to build bridges, make friends, and pass on accurate information. But it can also present a greater possibility of misunderstanding and sometimes even prejudice if we allow others to define who we are and what we believe rather than presenting it ourselves.

Generally there is no problem with those who are personally acquainted with our members. But there are millions upon millions who are not acquainted with any members of our faith. I would hope that those who know very little about the Church would seek to learn more about us. I would hope they would get to know our members rather than judging us by the misinformation given by those who do not know and in some cases by those

who would deliberately mislead or defame.

You as members can help this to happen by reaching out and sharing with others the basic information found in the Articles of Faith, along with such things as the facts, faith, families, and fruits of the gospel.

We should also remember that sometimes the best way to answer people's interest can be by how we live, how we radiate the joy of the gospel in our lives, how we treat others, and how sincerely we follow the teachings of Christ.

For those who want to learn more than just the few basics I have discussed, the missionaries can be called upon to teach them the doctrine from chapter 3 in *Preach My Gospel*. The missionaries know how to answer more of their questions and lead them to conversion and baptism.

Now is the time for all of us to reach out and tell others who we are. Prepare some simple facts such as those I have shared with you today and help those who are curious to know a little about the Church and then to want to know more about the Restoration of the gospel.

Brothers and sisters, never hesitate to bear your testimony with sincerity and love. The power of personal testimony cannot be denied and often ignites in others the interest to know more. I know this to be true and leave you my absolute witness that I know The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true, and I bear that testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Charity—"a more excellent way"

Brethren and sisters, I would like to ask one very important question: What quality defines us best as members of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

Today I would like to speak about the answer to this question.

In the first century A.D., members of the growing Church in Corinth were enthusiastic about the gospel. Almost all were recent converts to the Church. Many were attracted to it through the preaching of the Apostle Paul and others.

But the Saints at Corinth were also contentious. They argued amongst themselves. Some felt superior to others. They took each other to court.

When Paul heard this, feeling a sense of frustration, he wrote them a letter, pleading with them to become more unified. He answered many of the questions they had been arguing about. Then toward the end he told them that he wanted to show them “a more excellent way.”¹

Do you remember the words he wrote next?

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity,” he told them, “I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”²

Paul’s message to this new body of Saints was simple and direct: Nothing you do makes much of a difference if you do not have charity. You can speak with tongues, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and possess all knowledge; even if you have the faith to move mountains, without charity it won’t profit you at all.³

“Charity is the pure love of Christ.”⁴ The Savior exemplified that love and taught it even as He was tormented by those who despised and hated Him.

The great commandment

On one occasion the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus by asking Him a seemingly impossible question: “Master,” they asked, “which is the great commandment in the law?”⁵

The Pharisees had debated this question extensively and had identified more than 600 commandments.⁶ If prioritizing them was such a difficult task for scholars, certainly, they thought, the question

would be impossible for this son of a carpenter from Galilee.

But when the Pharisees heard His answer, they must have been troubled, for it pointed to their great weakness. He replied:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”⁷

Since that day, this inspired pronouncement has been repeated through many generations. Now, for us, the measure of our love is the measure of the greatness of our souls.

Love is the pathway of discipleship

The scriptures tell us that “if any man love God, the same is known of him.”⁸ What a wonderful promise—to be known of Him. It makes the spirit soar to think that the Creator of heaven and earth could know us and love us with a pure, eternal love.

In 1840 the Prophet Joseph sent an epistle to the Twelve wherein he taught that “love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race.”⁹

As we reach out in love to those around us, we fulfill the other half of the great commandment to “love thy neighbour as thyself.”¹⁰

Both commandments are necessary, for as we bear one another’s burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ.¹¹

Love is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the pathway of discipleship. It comforts, counsels, cures, and

consoles. It leads us through valleys of darkness and through the veil of death. In the end love leads us to the glory and grandeur of eternal life.

Joseph Smith's example of love

For me, the Prophet Joseph Smith has always exemplified the pure love of Christ. Many asked why he gained so many followers and retained them. His answer: "It is because I possess the principle of love."¹²

The story is told of a 14-year-old boy who had come to Nauvoo in search of his brother who lived near there. The young boy had arrived in winter with no money and no friends. When he inquired about his brother, the boy was taken to a large house that looked like a hotel. There he met a man who said, "Come in, son, we'll take care of you."

The boy accepted and was brought into the house, where he was fed, warmed, and given a bed to sleep in.

The next day it was bitter cold, but in spite of that, the boy prepared himself to walk the eight miles to where his brother was staying.

When the man of the house saw this, he told the young boy to stay for a while. He said there would be a team coming soon and that he could ride back with them.

When the boy protested, saying that he had no money, the man told him not to worry about that—that they would take care of him.

Later the boy learned that the man of the house was none other than Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet. This boy remembered this act of charity for the rest of his life.¹³

Simple acts of kindness and caring

In a recent message of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's *Music and the Spoken Word*, a story was told about an elderly man and woman who had been married

for many decades. Because the wife was slowly losing her sight, she could no longer take care of herself the way she had done for so many years. Without being asked, the husband began to paint her fingernails for her.

"He knew that she could see her fingernails when she held them close to her eyes, at just the right angle, and they made her smile. He liked to see her happy, so he kept painting her nails for more than five years before she passed away."¹⁴

That is an example of the pure love of Christ. Sometimes the greatest love is not found in the dramatic scenes that poets and writers immortalize. Often the greatest manifestations of love are the simple acts of kindness and caring we extend to those we meet along the path of life.

Christlike love transforms us

True love lasts forever. It is eternally patient and forgiving. It believes, hopes, and endures all things. That is the love our Heavenly Father bears for us.

We all yearn to experience love like this. Even when we make mistakes, we hope others will love us in spite of our shortcomings—even if we don't deserve it.

Oh, it is wonderful to know that our Heavenly Father loves us, even with all our flaws! His love is such that even should we give up on ourselves, He never will.

We see ourselves in terms of yesterday and today. Our Heavenly Father sees us in terms of forever. Although we might settle for less, Heavenly Father won't, for He sees us as the glorious beings we are capable of becoming.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of transformation. It takes us as men and women of the earth and refines us into men and women for the eternities.

The means of this refinement is our Christlike love. There is no pain it cannot soften, no bitterness it cannot remove, no hatred it cannot alter. The Greek play-

wright Sophocles wrote, “One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life: That word is love.”¹⁵

The most cherished and sacred moments of our lives are those filled with the spirit of love. The greater the measure of our love, the greater is our joy. In the end, the development of such love is the true measure of success in life.

Love leads to obedience

Do you love the Lord?

Spend time with Him. Meditate on His words. Take His yoke upon you. Seek to understand and obey because “this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.”¹⁶ When we love the Lord, obedience ceases to be a burden. Obedience becomes a delight. When we love the Lord, we seek less for things that benefit us and turn our hearts toward things that will bless and uplift others.

As our love for the Lord deepens, our minds and hearts become purified. We experience a “mighty change in . . . our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”¹⁷

Brethren and sisters, as you prayerfully consider what you can do to increase harmony, spirituality, and build up the kingdom of God, consider your sacred duty to teach others to love the Lord and their fellowman. This is the central object of our existence. Without charity—or the pure love of Christ—whatever else we accomplish matters little. With it, all else becomes vibrant and alive.

When we inspire and teach others to fill their hearts with love, obedience flows from the inside out in voluntary acts of self-sacrifice and service. Yes, those who go home teaching out of duty, for example, may fulfill their obligation. But those who home teach out of genuine love for the Lord and for their fellowman will likely approach that task with a very different attitude.

Love is the essence of the gospel

Returning to my original question, What quality defines us best as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? I would answer: we are a people who love the Lord with all our hearts, souls, and minds, and we love our neighbors as ourselves.

That is our signature as a people. It is like a beacon to the world, signaling whose disciples we are.¹⁸

At the final day the Savior will not ask about the nature of our callings. He will not inquire about our material possessions or fame. He will ask if we ministered to the sick, gave food and drink to the hungry, visited those in prison, or gave succor to the weak.¹⁹ When we reach out to assist the least of our Heavenly Father’s children, we do it unto Him.²⁰ That is the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The great love of the Savior

If we wish to learn truly how to love, all we need to do is reflect on the life of our Savior. When we partake of the sacramental emblems, we are reminded of the greatest example of love in all the world’s history. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”²¹

The Savior’s love for us was so great that it caused “even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore.”²²

Because the Savior laid down His life for us,²³ we have a brightness of hope, a confidence and security that when we pass from this worldly existence, we will live again with Him. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ we can be cleansed of sin and stand as partakers of the gift of our Almighty Father. Then we will know the glory that God “hath prepared for them that love him.”²⁴

This is the transforming power of charity.

When Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment to “love one another; as I have loved you,”²⁵ He gave to them the grand key to happiness in this life and glory in the next.

Love is the greatest of all the commandments—all others hang upon it. It is our focus as followers of the living Christ. It is the one trait that, if developed, will most improve our lives.

I bear testimony that God lives. His love is infinite and eternal. It extends to all of His children. Because He loves us, He has provided prophets and apostles to guide us in our time. He has given us the Holy Ghost, who teaches, comforts, and inspires.

He has given us His scriptures. And I am grateful beyond description that He has given to each of us a heart capable of experiencing the pure love of Christ.

I pray that our hearts may be filled with that love and that we may reach out to our Heavenly Father and to others with new vision and new faith. I testify that as we do so, we will discover a greater richness in life. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Corinthians 12:31.
2. 1 Corinthians 13:1.

3. See 1 Corinthians 13:1–2.
4. Moroni 7:47.
5. Matthew 22:36.
6. See Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1994), 528–29.
7. Matthew 22:37–40.
8. 1 Corinthians 8:3.
9. *History of the Church*, 4:227.
10. Galatians 5:14.
11. See Galatians 6:2.
12. *History of the Church*, 5:498.
13. See Mark L. McConkie, *Remembering Joseph: Personal Recollections of Those Who Knew the Prophet Joseph Smith* (2003), 57.
14. “Selflessness,” Sept. 23, 2007, broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word*; available at www.musicandthespokenword.com/messages.
15. *Oedipus at Colonus*, in *The Oedipus Cycle*, trans. Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (1949), 161–62.
16. 1 John 5:3.
17. Mosiah 5:2.
18. See John 13:35.
19. See Matthew 25:31–40.
20. See Matthew 25:40.
21. John 3:16.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
23. See John 15:13.
24. 1 Corinthians 2:9; see also Isaiah 64:4.
25. John 13:34.

Elder Bruce D. Porter

A broken heart and a contrite spirit

How I love Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin!

The poet Rudyard Kipling wrote the following words in 1897, an admonition to the British Empire against pride:

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
[“God of Our Fathers, Known of Old,”
Hymns, no. 80]

When Kipling spoke of a contrite heart as an “ancient sacrifice,” perhaps he had in mind the words of King David in the 51st Psalm: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart” (v. 17). David’s words show that even in Old Testament times, the Lord’s people understood that their hearts must be given to God, that burnt offerings alone were not enough.

The sacrifices mandated during the Mosaic dispensation pointed symbolically to the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah,

who alone could reconcile sinful man with God. As Amulek taught, “Behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; . . . the Son of God” (Alma 34:14).

After His Resurrection, Jesus Christ declared to the people in the New World:

“Your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of [them]. . . .

“And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart . . . , him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:19–20).

What are a broken heart and a contrite spirit? And why are they considered a sacrifice?

The Savior’s perfect submission

As in all things, the Savior’s life offers us the perfect example: although Jesus of Nazareth was utterly without sin, He walked through life with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, as manifested by His submission to the will of the Father. “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). To His disciples He said, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). And when the time came to make the ultimate sacrifice entailed in the Atonement, Christ shrank not to partake of the bitter cup but submitted completely to His Father’s will.

The Savior’s perfect submission to the Eternal Father is the very essence of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Christ’s example teaches us that a broken heart is an eternal attribute of godliness. When our hearts are broken, we are completely open to the Spirit of God and recognize our dependence on Him for all that we have and all that we are. The sacrifice so entailed is a sacrifice of pride in

all its forms. Like malleable clay in the hands of a skilled potter, the broken-hearted can be molded and shaped in the hands of the Master.

Preconditions to repentance

A broken heart and a contrite spirit are also preconditions to repentance. Lehi taught:

“Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah. . . .

“Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered” (2 Nephi 2:6–7).

When we sin and desire forgiveness, a broken heart and a contrite spirit mean to experience “godly sorrow [that] worketh repentance” (2 Corinthians 7:10). This comes when our desire to be cleansed from sin is so consuming that our hearts ache with sorrow and we yearn to feel at peace with our Father in Heaven. Those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit are willing to do anything and everything that God asks of them, without resistance or resentment. We cease doing things our way and learn to do them God’s way instead. In such a condition of submissiveness, the Atonement can take effect and true repentance can occur. The penitent will then experience the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, which will fill them with peace of conscience and the joy of reconciliation with God. In a wondrous union of divine attributes, the same God who teaches us to walk with a broken heart invites us to rejoice and to be of good cheer.

A divine shield against temptation

When we have received a forgiveness of sins, a broken heart serves as a divine shield against temptation. Nephi prayed, “May the gates of hell be shut continually

before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite!" (2 Nephi 4:32). King Benjamin taught his people that if they would walk in the depths of humility, they might ever rejoice, "be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of . . . sins" (Mosiah 4:12). When we yield our hearts to the Lord, the attractions of the world simply lose their luster.

Increased gratitude for Christ's suffering

There is yet another dimension of a broken heart—namely, our deep gratitude for Christ's suffering on our behalf. In Gethsemane, the Savior "descended below all things" (D&C 88:6) as He bore

the burden of sin for every human being. At Golgotha, He "poured out his soul unto death" (Isaiah 53:12), and His great heart literally broke with an all-encompassing love for the children of God. When we remember the Savior and His suffering, our hearts too will break in gratitude for the Anointed One.

As we make the sacrifice to Him of all that we have and all that we are, the Lord will fill our hearts with peace. He will "bind up the brokenhearted" (Isaiah 61:1) and grace our lives with the love of God, "sweet above all that is sweet, . . . and pure above all that is pure" (Alma 32:42). Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Erich W. Kopischke

***Preach My Gospel*—a great resource**

Not long ago we invited two sister missionaries over for lunch. After we finished eating, we asked them to leave a spiritual thought with us. They were well prepared and introduced a scripture reading and marking exercise to us. They had brought a fresh copy of the Book of Mormon and a set of colored pencils. We accepted the invitation of the missionaries. Since then, our daily Book of Mormon family scripture reading has changed. In every chapter we mark with different colors the passages related to Jesus Christ as we discover them. Every time, this little exercise reminds us of our missionaries.

When the missionaries presented this, we immediately recognized it as a scripture study exercise suggested in *Preach My Gospel*. As a family, we are so thankful for this great and powerful missionary tool.

For the past three years missionaries have been using *Preach My Gospel* all around the world. It has truly revolution-

ized missionary work. The great vision of President Hinckley is being fulfilled: Missionaries "master the concepts of the lessons." They "teach the concepts in their own words under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit" (see "Missionary Service," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 11, 2003, 19).

As the missionaries become immersed in *Preach My Gospel*, they learn and apply important doctrines and principles which make them more capable in their important service. Despite this, they still need all of our help and support. Only together can we fulfill the great charge given to the ancient and modern Apostles: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Unifying members, missionaries

In order to be successful in these efforts, we must be one with the missionaries, and we must understand one another. Do you always understand the missionaries? I do not refer to language but rather

to how they do missionary work. We see and observe them inviting people to listen to their message. They teach gospel principles and invite those who are interested to change their lives and be baptized and confirmed members of the Church.

If we want to understand and help our missionaries, we must have faith as missionaries have faith, we must think as missionaries think, and we must feel as missionaries feel. How can we achieve that?

One important way, of course, is to be with the missionaries and see them do what they do. But another way for us is to get acquainted with *Preach My Gospel* and learn more about missionary work. Ever since President McKay said, “Every member a missionary,” members have been striving to become more active in sharing the gospel (in Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122). With *Preach My Gospel*, we have a marvelous guide to help us act on this invitation. Our own study of *Preach My Gospel* will not only help us to develop a greater understanding and appreciation for our missionaries, but it will help us in our own day-to-day lives.

Becoming better member missionaries

Every member of our family owns a copy of *Preach My Gospel*. Studying this guide is a great support in developing a strong testimony. It helps us understand fundamental gospel principles and the desire to serve. Allow me for a moment to highlight some of the headings of *Preach My Gospel* ([2004], iii), and you will understand. They read:

“How Do I Recognize and Understand the Spirit?”

“How Do I Study Effectively and Prepare to Teach?”

“What Do I Study and Teach?”

“What Is the Role of the Book of Mormon?”

“How Do I Develop Christlike Attributes?”

Aren’t those the things that all of us want to learn? For everyone who wants to become a better member missionary and who wants to know how to support the missionaries, *Preach My Gospel* is full of powerful ideas and insights. We learn how we can help the missionaries find people to teach and how we as members can work hand in hand with the missionaries to help those who are investigating the Church. We learn to understand why strong invitations to act are helpful to increase faith in Jesus Christ and how we can stand with our nonmember friends who are moving through this wonderful, life-changing process of conversion.

Along with studying the scriptures, missionaries study *Preach My Gospel* every day. They learn principles and skills, and they apply them. They especially learn how to use the guidance of the Spirit in their work. If we want to learn as missionaries do, we too must carefully study *Preach My Gospel* and observe the missionaries in their daily work.

In the introduction to *Preach My Gospel* we read: “*Preach My Gospel* is for the full-time missionaries of the Church. However, the principles and doctrines taught herein are also applicable to ward missionaries and leaders as they seek to build the Lord’s kingdom. Frequent study of this manual will enable them to fulfill their responsibilities as member missionaries and will foster unity with the full-time missionaries” (xi).

How to study and use *Preach My Gospel*

Elder Richard G. Scott taught that all members should carefully study *Preach My Gospel*. He said:

“Much good has been accomplished . . . since *Preach My Gospel* was introduced, but the best is yet to come as we all become more proficient in the use of this extraordinary missionary tool” (in

Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 32; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 31).

Our time may seem limited to do this study, so therefore let me give a few suggestions that may help.

- Youth preparing for a mission should carefully study *Preach My Gospel* along with the scriptures.

- Invite the missionaries into your home. Ask them to teach you and your family a principle or doctrine from *Preach My Gospel*.

- Every once in a while, use *Preach My Gospel* for family home evening. Let your teenage children teach your family as missionaries would do. In our home, we have had some surprisingly great lessons given by our children. We have been astonished at how well they taught simple principles. Sometimes we have invited friends to those lessons.

- Gospel teachers could use the simple but effective principles of gospel teaching as outlined in *Preach My Gospel* as a support to the prescribed courses of study.

- *Preach My Gospel* has been translated and published in almost every language our members speak. In countries where the Church is still young, *Preach My Gospel* may be used along with the scriptures as a resource and foundation for all gospel learning and teaching.

- Elder Scott encouraged local leaders “to use these materials in . . . presidencies, priesthood executive committee meetings, and ward councils” (*Ensign*, May 2005, 31).

- Use *Preach My Gospel* as a resource for training, talks, spiritual thoughts, lessons, firesides, and personal study.

Becoming one in proclaiming the gospel

I bear witness that this missionary guide is inspired of God. We must study it more carefully, that we may understand our missionaries and their work better. Missionaries and members must speak one language. We must become one in our efforts to proclaim the gospel. It will better enable us to become tools in the hand of the Lord, for He said, “And even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in me, and hearken unto my voice” (D&C 33:6).

As members of His Church, we are expected to be a part of this glorious gathering process. Of this truth I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Come, Ye Saints.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Michael J. Teh and Keith K. Hilbig of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang
“Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

Elder Michael J. Teh

Our responsibility to serve others

Mabuhay from the lovely and wonderful people of the Philippines.

One of the oldest and most profound questions uttered in the history of this earth was, most interestingly, asked by

Cain in response to God’s inquiry soon after Cain slew his brother Abel: “Am I my brother’s keeper?”¹ This question deserves serious contemplation by those seeking to do the will of the Lord. One of the answers is in the teachings of Alma:

“And now, . . . ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light;

“Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”²

As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a responsibility to care for and serve our brothers and sisters. In relating the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus Christ not only confounded His enemies but also taught a great lesson to all who sought to follow Him. We need to enlarge the circle of our influence. Our service to others should be independent of race, color, standing, or relationships. After all, the commandment to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees”³ did not come with qualifications.

Simple, day-to-day service

Many believe that for service to be meaningful it should consist of having elaborate plans and forming a committee. Although many of these worthwhile projects help, much of the service needed in the world today relates to our day-to-day associations with each other. Often we find these opportunities within the confines of our own home, neighborhood, and ward.

The following advice, given by the deceitful Screwtape to his nephew Wormwood in C. S. Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters*, describes a common malady afflicting many of us today:

“Do what you will, there is going to be some benevolence, as well as some malice, in your patient’s soul. The great thing is to direct the malice to his immediate neighbours whom he meets every day and to thrust his benevolence out to the remote circumference, to people he does not know. The malice thus becomes wholly real and the benevolence largely imaginary.”⁴

The words from a popular hymn prescribe the perfect remedy:

Has anyone’s burden been lighter today
Because I was willing to share?
Have the sick and the weary been
helped on their way?
When they needed my help was I there?
Then wake up and do something more
Than dream of your mansion above.
Doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond
measure,
A blessing of duty and love.⁵

Encouragement to serve a mission

The following are events that I have been privileged to witness that have taught me how simple acts of service can help us and those we are permitted to influence. Our Heavenly Father places loving individuals on important crossroads to help us so that we are not left alone to grope in the dark. These men and women help by example and with patience and love. Such has been my experience.

I recall a particularly important crossroad—the decision to go on a full-time mission. I stood on that crossroad for a very, very long time. As I struggled to decide which road to take, my family, friends, and priesthood leaders came forward to take my hand. They encouraged and challenged me and offered countless prayers on my behalf. My full-time missionary sister wrote to me regularly and never gave up.

Even today I am still carried on the shoulders of good men and women. I suspect that we all are. To some degree we all depend on each other to be able to make it back to our heavenly home.

Sharing the gospel with “Uncle Fred”

Sharing the gospel message is one of the most rewarding ways we can render service to those who are not of our faith. I recall a childhood experience with someone I will simply call Uncle Fred.

When I was six years old, Uncle Fred was my worst nightmare. He was our neighbor, and he was always drunk. One of his favorite pastimes was to throw rocks at our home.

Because my mother was a great cook, single adult members from our small branch frequented our home. One day when Uncle Fred was sober, these members befriended him and invited him into our home. This development terrified me. He was no longer just outside but inside our home. This happened a few more times until finally they were able to convince Uncle Fred to listen to the missionaries. He accepted the gospel and was baptized. He served a full-time mission, returned with honor, pursued further education, and was married in the temple. He is now a righteous husband, father, and priesthood leader. Watching Uncle Fred today, one would find it difficult to believe that he once brought nightmares into the life of a six-year-old boy. May we always be perceptive to opportunities to share the gospel.

A mother's unselfish service

My mother was a great example of helping others by giving them a boost. She taught us many important lessons. The one lesson that has had the most lasting effect on my life was her desire to help anyone in need who visited our home. It bothered me to see many of them leave with our food, our clothing,

and even our money. Because I was young and we were poor, I did not like what I saw. How could she give to others when our family did not even have enough? Was it wrong to attend to our needs first? Didn't we deserve a more comfortable life?

For years I struggled with these questions. Much later in life I finally realized what Mother was teaching. Even as she struggled with the effects of a crippling disease, she could not stop giving to those in need.

Out of small things

"Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."⁶ Serving others need not come from spectacular events. Often it is the simple daily act that gives comfort, uplifts, encourages, sustains, and brings a smile to others.

May we always find opportunities to serve is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Genesis 4:9; Moses 5:34.
2. Mosiah 18:8–9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
4. *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (2002), 201.
5. "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.

Elder Keith K. Hilbig

Quench not the Spirit

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, Paul admonished the members to act in a manner as becometh Saints. He proceeded to list appropriate attributes and behaviors. In verse 19 Paul counseled with these four simple words: "Quench not the Spirit."

Interestingly, some 500 years *before* Paul's writings, a Book of Mormon prophet named Jacob sought to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to a resistant people. He boldly inquired of them as follows: "Will ye reject the words of the prophets; and will ye . . . deny the good

word of Christ, . . . and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and quench the Holy Spirit?"¹

In our day, so many centuries *after* both Paul and Jacob, we too must be careful *not* to hinder, disregard, or quench the Spirit in our lives.

The Holy Ghost guides and enlightens us

The beckoning invitations of the world attempt to divert our attention from the strait and narrow path. The adversary labors to dull our sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit, whether we are teenagers, young adults, or mature men and women. The role of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is essential in every season of our mortal lives.

From the beginning the Father has promised each of His spirit sons and daughters that through the Atonement and Resurrection of His Beloved Son, we *all* might return to God's presence and inherit the blessings of eternal life in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom.

Each of us knew that the journey to exaltation would be long, strenuous, and sometimes lonely, but we also knew that we would not travel alone. Heavenly Father provides all who fulfill the prerequisites of faith, repentance, and baptism with a companion and guide, the Holy Ghost.

The path to eternal life is not on a plateau. Rather, it is an incline, ever onward and upward. Hence, ever-increasing spiritual understanding and energy are required to reach our destination. Because the pernicious opposition by Satan continues, the continuous enlightened guidance of the Holy Ghost is absolutely essential. We dare not hinder, disregard, or quench the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Yet when it comes to drawing upon the promptings and the blessings which flow from the Holy Ghost, we often "live far beneath our privileges."²

In the Pearl of Great Price, Moses recorded that Adam, having been bap-

tized and having received the Holy Ghost, "became quickened in the inner man."³

When we invite the Holy Ghost to fill our minds with light and knowledge, He "quickens" us—that is to say, enlightens and enlivens the inner man or woman.⁴ As a result we notice a measurable difference in our soul. We feel strengthened, filled with peace and joy. We possess spiritual energy and enthusiasm, both of which enhance our natural abilities. We can accomplish more than we otherwise could do on our own. We yearn to become a holier person.

How to have an abundance of the Spirit

Do you wish to know the price to be paid for the privileges that are offered after we have received the Holy Ghost? The price is not a predetermined or fixed amount; rather, it is determined by each of us individually.

If you set your payment, which is your personal effort, very low, you may not be able to avail yourself of *all* the Spirit has to offer. You may even quench the Spirit! However, if you set your personal contribution high, you will reap an abundant harvest from the Spirit. The payment I reference is, of course, not money; rather, it is a greater commitment to and involvement in personal spiritual endeavors and behaviors.

We determine the level of our current personal contribution by examining our present choices and priorities against questions such as these:

1. Do I spend more time with sports than Church attendance or callings?
2. If I have a free day, do I choose to attend the temple or to visit the mall?
3. Do I resort to computer games or surfing the Internet rather than offering meaningful service to others in my home and community?
4. Do I read the newspaper religiously but find it difficult to read the scriptures daily?

There are other questions you might formulate which will reveal the appropriateness of your current choices and priorities.

Make more time for the things of eternity

Whatever level of spiritual development each of us presently has, there always exists a higher level within our reach. Time is a most precious asset. Would you consider investing more of your time in the things of eternity in order to merit the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and to benefit more fully from His influence?

If your answer is yes, the initial offering in this pursuit of deeper spirituality is an intensified desire to receive greater inspiration and to become more holy. When these desires fill our hearts, we will eagerly increase the price we pay for heaven's help.

Our next contribution to this effort will be to immerse ourselves more consistently in the words of Christ and of the prophets. When our study efforts expand, so will the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives increase. Let us search the scriptures with pen in hand, making note of new insights and recording spiritual promptings. Thereafter, let us strive to *apply* what has been learned to our personal lives. The Spirit will quicken our inner selves; new understanding will come precept upon precept.

To ensure we quench not the Spirit, but rather invite His presence, there is another step to take. Let us pray frequently and fervently. The Savior's tender and comprehensive promise is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:

- "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you."
- "Seek me diligently and ye shall find me."
- "Ask, and ye shall receive."
- "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

- "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you."⁵

Note that sequence, brothers and sisters. We draw nearer to the Savior as we keep His commandments with exactness. We earnestly petition the Father in the name of Christ. Then, through the promptings of the Holy Ghost, we receive divine direction and clear understanding.

As we fast, renew our covenants during the sacrament, and attend the temple, we further access the Spirit. In these settings the Holy Ghost may manifest His influence with great impact.

The temple is a marvelous environment for us to seek personal revelation. When we attend as often as we can and listen thoughtfully, pondering the glorious promises and expectations pertaining to eternity, we depart with heightened understanding of our Heavenly Father's plan for us. The Holy Ghost extends our vision and allows that eternal perspective to influence the decisions we make in our daily lives.

Let us live in the Spirit

If we undertake this effort and quench not the Spirit, our inner being is quickened. As we persevere, eternal life awaits us. Thus, we dare not quench the Spirit through disobedience or neglect. Rather, let us "live in the Spirit,"⁶ enhancing the sacred and essential role of the Holy Ghost in our individual lives. I testify that as we truly seek the Spirit, we shall benefit more fully from the quiet, but essential, workings of the Holy Ghost. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jacob 6:8.
2. Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 32.
3. Moses 6:65.
4. See Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 9th ed. (1965), 101: "The gift of

the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions

and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use.”

5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63–64.

6. Galatians 5:25.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Declaring our Christianity

As Elder Ballard noted earlier in this session, various cross-currents of our times have brought increasing public attention to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord told the ancients this latter-day work would be “a marvellous work and a wonder,”¹ and it is. But even as we invite one and all to examine closely the *marvel* of it, there is one thing we would not like anyone to *wonder* about—that is whether or not we are “Christians.”

By and large any controversy in this matter has swirled around two doctrinal issues—our view of the Godhead and our belief in the principle of continuing revelation leading to an open scriptural canon. In addressing this we do not need to be apologists for our faith, but we would like not to be misunderstood. So with a desire to increase understanding and unequivocally declare our Christianity, I speak today on the first of those two doctrinal issues just mentioned.

The doctrine of the Godhead

Our first and foremost article of faith in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”² We believe these three divine persons constituting a single Godhead are united in purpose, in manner, in testimony, in mission. We believe Them to be filled with the same godly sense of mercy and love, justice and grace, patience, forgiveness, and redemption. I think it is accurate to

say we believe They are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable *except* believing Them to be three persons combined in one substance, a Trinitarian notion never set forth in the scriptures because it is not true.

Indeed no less a source than the stalwart *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* records that “the formal doctrine of the Trinity as it was defined by the great church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries is *not* to be found in the [New Testament].”³

So any criticism that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not hold the contemporary Christian view of God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost is *not* a comment about our commitment to Christ but rather a recognition (accurate, I might add) that our view of the Godhead breaks with post–New Testament Christian history and returns to the doctrine taught by Jesus Himself. Now, a word about that post–New Testament history might be helpful.

Post–New Testament creeds

In the year A.D. 325 the Roman emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea to address—among other things—the growing issue of God’s alleged “trinity in unity.” What emerged from the heated contentions of churchmen, philosophers, and ecclesiastical dignitaries came to be known (after another 125 years and three more major councils)⁴ as the Nicene Creed, with later reformulations such as the Athanasian Creed. These various evolutions and iterations of creeds—and others to come

over the centuries—declared the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be abstract, absolute, transcendent, imminent, consubstantial, coeternal, and unknowable, without body, parts, or passions and dwelling outside space and time. In such creeds all three members are separate persons, but they are a single being, the oft-noted “mystery of the trinity.” They are three distinct persons, yet not three Gods but one. All three persons are incomprehensible, yet it is one God who is incomprehensible.

We agree with our critics on at least that point—that such a formulation for divinity is truly incomprehensible. With such a confusing definition of God being imposed upon the church, little wonder that a fourth-century monk cried out, “Woe is me! They have taken my God away from me, . . . and I know not whom to adore or to address.”⁵ How are we to trust, love, worship, to say nothing of strive to be like, One who is incomprehensible and unknowable? What of Jesus’s prayer to His Father in Heaven that “this is life eternal, that they might *know thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom *thou* hast sent”?⁶

It is not our purpose to demean any person’s belief nor the doctrine of any religion. We extend to all the same respect for their doctrine that we are asking for ours. (That, too, is an article of our faith.) But if one says we are not Christians because we do not hold a fourth- or fifth-century view of the Godhead, then what of those first Christian Saints, many of whom were eyewitnesses of the living Christ, who did not hold such a view either?⁷

Three separate divine beings

We declare it is self-evident from the scriptures that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are separate persons, three divine beings, noting such unequivocal illustrations as the Savior’s great

Intercessory Prayer just mentioned, His baptism at the hands of John, the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the martyrdom of Stephen—to name just four.

With these New Testament sources and more⁸ ringing in our ears, it may be redundant to ask what Jesus meant when He said, “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.”⁹ On another occasion He said, “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”¹⁰ Of His antagonists He said, “[They have] . . . seen and hated both me and my Father.”¹¹ And there is, of course, that always deferential subordination to His Father that had Jesus say, “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.”¹² “My Father is greater than I.”¹³

To whom was Jesus pleading so fervently all those years, including in such anguished cries as “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”¹⁴ and “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me”?¹⁵ To acknowledge the scriptural evidence that otherwise perfectly united members of the Godhead are nevertheless separate and distinct beings is not to be guilty of polytheism; it is, rather, part of the great revelation Jesus came to deliver concerning the nature of divine beings. Perhaps the Apostle Paul said it best: “Christ Jesus . . . being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”¹⁶

A glorified, embodied God

A related reason The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is excluded from the Christian category by some is because we believe, as did the ancient prophets and apostles, in an embodied—but certainly glorified—God.¹⁷ To those who criticize this scripturally based belief, I ask at least rhetorically: If the idea of an embodied God is repugnant, why

are the central doctrines and singularly most distinguishing characteristics of all Christianity the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the physical Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? If having a body is not only not needed but not desirable by Deity, why did the Redeemer of mankind redeem *His* body, redeeming it from the grasp of death and the grave, guaranteeing it would never again be separated from His spirit in time or eternity?¹⁸ *Any who dismiss the concept of an embodied God dismiss both the mortal and the resurrected Christ.* No one claiming to be a true Christian will want to do that.

We testify of Jesus Christ

Now, to anyone within the sound of my voice who has wondered regarding our Christianity, I bear this witness. I testify that Jesus Christ is the literal, living Son of our literal, living God. This Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer, who, under the guidance of the Father, was the Creator of heaven and earth and all things that in them are. I bear witness that He was born of a virgin mother, that in His lifetime He performed mighty miracles observed by legions of His disciples and by His enemies as well. I testify that He had power over death because He was divine but that He willingly subjected Himself to death for our sake because for a period of time He was also mortal. I declare that in His willing submission to death He took upon Himself the sins of the world, paying an infinite price for every sorrow and sickness, every heartache and unhappiness from Adam to the end of the world. In doing so He conquered both the grave physically and hell spiritually and set the human family free. I bear witness that He was literally resurrected from the tomb and, after ascending to His Father to complete the process of that resurrection, He appeared repeatedly to hundreds of disciples in the Old World and in the New. I know He is the Holy

One of Israel, the Messiah who will one day come again in final glory to reign on earth as Lord of lords and King of kings. I know that there is no other name given under heaven whereby a man can be saved and that only by relying wholly upon His merits, mercy, and everlasting grace¹⁹ can we gain eternal life.

The true gospel has been restored

My additional testimony regarding this resplendent doctrine is that in preparation for His millennial latter-day reign, Jesus has already come, more than once, in embodied majestic glory. In the spring of 1820 a 14-year-old boy, confused by many of these very doctrines that still confuse much of Christendom, went into a grove of trees to pray. In answer to that earnest prayer offered at such a tender age, the Father and the Son appeared as embodied, glorified beings to the boy prophet Joseph Smith. That day marked the beginning of the return of the true, New Testament gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the restoration of other prophetic truths offered from Adam down to the present day.

I testify that my witness of these things is true and that the heavens are open to all who seek the same confirmation. Through the Holy Spirit of Truth, may we *all* know “the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [He has] sent.”²⁰ Then may we live Their teachings and be true Christians in deed, as well as in word, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Isaiah 29:14.
2. Articles of Faith 1:1.
3. Paul J. Achtemeier, ed. (1985), 1099; italics added.
4. Constantinople, A.D. 381; Ephesus, A.D. 431; Chalcedon, A.D. 451.
5. Quoted in Owen Chadwick, *Western Asceticism* (1958), 235.
6. John 17:3; italics added.

7. For a thorough discussion of this issue, see Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christian?* (1991), 71–89; see also Robert Millet, *Getting at the Truth* (2004), 106–22.
8. See, for example, John 12:27–30; John 14:26; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 1:1–3.
9. John 5:19; see also John 14:10.
10. John 6:38.
11. John 15:24.
12. Matthew 19:17.
13. John 14:28.
14. Matthew 26:39.
15. Matthew 27:46.
16. Philippians 2:5–6.
17. See David L. Paulsen, “Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses,” *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 83, no. 2 (1990): 105–16; David L. Paulsen, “The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (1996): 7–94; James L. Kugel, *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible* (2003), xi–xii, 5–6, 104–6, 134–35; Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* (2001), 33–34.
18. See Romans 6:9; Alma 11:45.
19. See 1 Nephi 10:6; 2 Nephi 2:8; 31:19; Moroni 6:4; Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 3:24.
20. John 17:3.

President Monson

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank this Young Women choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. They’ve been wonderful.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee.” At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Richard G. Hinckley of the Seventy.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Scriptural witnesses

We express love and admiration for President Henry B. Eyring, Elder Quentin L. Cook, and Elder Walter F. González and pray for the Lord’s blessings to attend them in their new callings.

We extend heartfelt feelings of gratitude to each of you, brothers and sisters. Throughout the world, your examples of service and compassion are receiving a great deal of attention. At the same time, many people are wondering about this Church’s history and doctrines. Among those questioners are some who choose to cast aspersions at the Book of Mormon.¹

Disregard for the Book of Mormon or for any other sacred scripture concerns me deeply. In addressing that concern, I have titled my remarks “Scriptural Witnesses.”

Definitions

I will define the term *scriptural* as pertaining to the Bible and the scriptures of the Restoration.² Members of the Church “believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.”³ Scriptures of the Restoration also include the Doctrine

and Covenants as well as the Pearl of Great Price.

A dictionary defines the noun *witness* as an “attestation of a fact or event: [a] testimony.”⁴ The term *witness* bears special significance when applied to the word of God. In the Bible we read this important declaration: “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.”⁵ This assures God’s children that divine doctrines are confirmed by more than one scriptural witness.

Scriptures testify of Jesus Christ

The Bible and the Book of Mormon are both witnesses of Jesus Christ. They teach that He is the Son of God, that He lived an exemplary life, that He atoned for all mankind, that He died upon the cross and rose again as the resurrected Lord. They teach that He is the Savior of the world.

Scriptural witnesses authenticate each other. This concept was explained long ago when a prophet wrote that the Book of Mormon was “written for the intent that ye may believe [the Bible]; and if ye believe [the Bible] ye will believe [the Book of Mormon] also.”⁶ Each book refers to the other. Each book stands as evidence that God lives and speaks to His children by revelation to His prophets.⁷

Love for the Book of Mormon expands one’s love for the Bible and vice versa. Scriptures of the Restoration do not compete with the Bible; they complement the Bible. We are indebted to martyrs who gave their lives so that we could have the Bible. It establishes the everlasting nature of the gospel and of the plan of happiness. The Book of Mormon restores and underscores biblical doctrines such as tithing,⁸ the temple,⁹ the Sabbath day,¹⁰ and the priesthood.¹¹

An angel proclaimed that the Book of Mormon¹² shall establish the truth of the Bible.¹³ He also revealed that writings in the Bible available in our day are not

as complete as they were when originally written by prophets and apostles.¹⁴ He declared that the Book of Mormon shall restore plain and precious things taken away from the Bible.¹⁵

A prophecy in the Book of Mormon warned that some people would object to the notion of additional scriptures. To those who think they “need no more Bible,”¹⁶ consider this God-given counsel:

“Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, . . . created all men, . . . and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?”

“. . . Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And . . . the testimony of the two nations shall run together also.”¹⁷

The scriptural story of Jesus Christ is indeed a two-hemisphere story.¹⁸ While Mary and Joseph in the East were making preparations for the holy child’s birth in Bethlehem,¹⁹ Nephi in the West was being taught by the premortal Messiah. To Nephi the Lord said, “Be of good cheer; . . . on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets.”²⁰

To doubters of that second witness—the Book of Mormon—the Lord issued a warning: “Because you have treated lightly the things you have received . . . [you] shall remain under . . . condemnation until [you] repent and remember . . . the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given . . . , [the Bible, and] . . . do according to that which I have written.”²¹

The Lord provided other scriptures of the Restoration²² and declared that those words will also be fulfilled.²³ With these scriptural witnesses, false doctrines

will be confounded.²⁴ With these scriptural witnesses, doctrines of the Bible are not only reaffirmed but clarified.

Restoration scriptures clarify the Bible

How do scriptures of the Restoration clarify the Bible? Many examples exist. I will cite but a few, beginning with the Old Testament.

Isaiah wrote, "Thou shalt . . . speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust."²⁵ Could any words be more descriptive of the Book of Mormon, coming as it did "out of the ground" to "whisper out of the dust" to people of our day?²⁶

But Isaiah was not the only Old Testament prophet who foretold the Book of Mormon. Ezekiel wrote:

"Take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel . . . : then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel . . . :

"And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand."²⁷

Today, Saints living in many nations of the earth gratefully hold the Bible (the stick of Judah) and the Book of Mormon (the stick of Ephraim) bound as one in their hands.

What about the New Testament? The Book of Mormon also stands as a scriptural witness to its teachings. Examples include the miraculous birth of the babe in Bethlehem,²⁸ His Sermon on the Mount,²⁹ and the intense suffering of the Savior.³⁰ The doctrine of the Resurrection is mentioned more frequently in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible.³¹

The need for the Holy Ghost was mentioned by Paul. He asked:

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost? . . . And they said unto him, We have not

so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."³²

That doctrine is clarified by another scriptural witness, conveyed through the Lord's prophet of the Restoration. He taught us to "believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands."³³ That precious and powerful gift is again available to children of God.

Paul referred to the three degrees of postmortal glory when he taught that "there is one glory of the sun, . . . another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars."³⁴ That glimpse into postmortal glory has been clarified by another scriptural witness. The Lord revealed that "the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one.

"And the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one.

"And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one."³⁵

The highest of these kingdoms, the celestial, is reserved for those who obey the law of that kingdom:

"They who are not sanctified through the law . . . of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.

"For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory."³⁶

These three degrees of glory relate to postmortal life. They relate to the immortality of the human soul. That gift of immortality became a reality because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.³⁷ This important word—*atonement*—in any of its forms, is mentioned only *once* in the King James Version of the New Testament!³⁸ In the Book of Mormon it appears 39 times!³⁹

John, writing in the New Testament's book of Revelation, foresaw "another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."⁴⁰ One specific angel held keys of

responsibility for the Book of Mormon.⁴¹ That was the angel Moroni! These examples are but a few of many biblical doctrines that are clarified by scriptures of the Restoration.⁴²

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ

Willingly we share scriptures of the Restoration with people across the world. The Book of Mormon records the personal ministry of the resurrected Lord to people of ancient America. Ponder these everlasting truths that He proclaimed:

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. . . .

“ . . . The scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled. . . .

“I am the light and the life of the world.”

The Savior continued:

“Whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost. . . .

“ . . . I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

“Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. . . . I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me . . . and be saved.”⁴³

Those declarations of the Lord summarize who He really is and who He really wants us to be. He wants us to come unto Him and, in due course, be embraced gloriously in His loving arms.

I express my profound gratitude for scriptural witnesses. I have seen the mighty change that comes to people who apply the Lord’s teachings in their lives. Such transformation leads to the blessing of eternal life.⁴⁴

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His gospel has been restored in these latter days. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet at this time. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. The full title is the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.
2. The Restoration was foreseen by Peter (see Acts 3:19–21), John (see Revelation 14:6–8), and Paul (see Ephesians 1:10). The Prophet Joseph Smith was instructed that, in this last dispensation, there is to be a “restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began” (D&C 27:6).
3. Articles of Faith 1:8.
4. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “witness,” 1439.
5. 2 Corinthians 13:1. Similar statements appear in Matthew 18:16 and Ether 5:4.
6. Mormon 7:9.
7. To the prophet of this present dispensation, the Lord declared, “This generation shall have my word through you” (D&C 5:10).
8. See Alma 13:15; 3 Nephi 24:8–10.
9. See 2 Nephi 5:16; Jacob 1:17; 2:2, 11; Mosiah 2:5–7.
10. See Mosiah 13:16–19; 18:23.
11. See 2 Nephi 6:2; Mosiah 18:18; Alma 6:1; 13:1–3, 6–11; 3 Nephi 18:5; Moroni 3:1–4.
12. The Book of Mormon is to “make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved” (1 Nephi 13:40).
13. See 1 Nephi 13:40.
14. See 1 Nephi 13:28–29.
15. See 1 Nephi 13:40.
16. 2 Nephi 29:6.
17. 2 Nephi 29:7–8.
18. Because He is Creator of “worlds without number” (Moses 1:33), additional scriptures from other locations are a distinct possibility.
19. See Luke 2:4–6.

20. 3 Nephi 1:13.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 84:54, 57.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
23. See Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:31–35.
24. See 2 Nephi 3:12; Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 8.
25. Isaiah 29:4.
26. Isaiah foresaw that God would do “a marvellous work and a wonder” in the latter days (Isaiah 29:14). Those words of Isaiah echoed in the ears of inhabitants of ancient America: “The Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men” (2 Nephi 25:17). That marvelous work would include the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration of the gospel. Isaiah was quoted frequently in the Book of Mormon. A study of those quotations may be tedious, but it is *not* repetitious. Of 433 verses of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, 234 differ from their biblical counterparts.
27. Ezekiel 37:16–17.
28. See 1 Nephi 11:13–20; Alma 7:10.
29. See 3 Nephi 12–14.
30. See Mosiah 3:7. A firsthand account of His suffering was given to His latter-day prophet (see D&C 19:16–19).
31. The word *resurrection* appears in 40 verses of the King James Version of the Bible; it appears in 56 verses in the Book of Mormon. See also Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (1997), 238–41.
32. Acts 19:2. See Acts 2:38 for the teaching of Peter regarding the need for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
33. *History of the Church*, 5:499.
34. 1 Corinthians 15:41.
35. Doctrine and Covenants 76:96–98; see also 131:1.
36. Doctrine and Covenants 88:21–22.
37. See Mosiah 16:10; Alma 42:23; Mormon 6:21.
38. See Romans 5:11.
39. *Atonement*: 28 times; *atone* or *atoning*: 8 times; *atoneth*: 3 times. In several verses, the word *atonement* appears more than once (see 2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:9; 42:23).
40. Revelation 14:6.
41. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:5; 128:20.
42. The New Testament refers to “other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). That doctrine is clarified in the Book of Mormon. It bears record of the resurrected Lord speaking to people of ancient America. There the Lord said, “Ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (3 Nephi 15:21).
A limited account of Paul’s knowledge of baptism for the dead appears in the New Testament (see 1 Corinthians 15:29). Only in scriptures of the Restoration is that divine doctrine clarified (see D&C 124:29–30, 41; 128:1, 11–12, 16–18; 138:47–48).
43. 3 Nephi 9:15–16, 18, 20–22.
44. See 3 Nephi 9:14; Doctrine and Covenants 30:8.

The choir sang “Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee.”

Elder Richard G. Hinckley offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 6, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A father-and-son choir from stakes in Centerville, Bountiful, and West Bountiful, Utah, provided the music. Stephen P. Shank directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a father-and-son choir

from stakes in Centerville, Bountiful, and West Bountiful, Utah, under the direction of Stephen P. Shank, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Redeemer of Israel.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Redeemer of Israel.”

Elder Earl C. Tingey offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing “Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us, after which we shall hear from Elders Donald L. Hallstrom and L. Whitney Clayton of the Seventy. They will be followed by Elder Walter F. González, sustained this morning as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings.”

Elder L. Tom Perry

Raising the bar in high jumping

I was privileged last month to be assigned to attend a seminar with the mission presidents from the North America West Area. Among the mission presidents in attendance was my son, Lee. He had been called to serve before I had completed my yearlong assignment in the Europe Central Area Presidency. It had

been three years since I had spent any time with my son, other than a few short visits while passing through his area on other assignments.

After a get-acquainted dinner with all of the mission presidents and their wives, Lee and I, with our wives, went to my hotel room for a visit. Our conversation, of course, centered on missionary work. Lee explained what had happened

to his missionaries since President Hinckley asked us to raise the bar on qualifications for missionary service. He reported a decided improvement in the preparation of the missionaries arriving in the mission field. The conversation led us to recall an experience Lee and I had while he was attending high school.

Lee was a member of his high school track team—he both sprinted and high-jumped. During the 1968 Summer Olympic Games held in Mexico City, the world became enamored with a little-known high jumper named Dick Fosbury. He had experimented with a new high-jumping technique that involved sprinting diagonally toward the bar, then curving and leaping backward over the bar. It came to be called the Fosbury flop.

Like many others, Lee was intrigued by this new technique, but until the new school year started, he didn't have a place to practice it. I came home one evening to find him practicing the Fosbury flop in our basement. He had set up two make-shift standards by stacking chairs, and he was jumping over a broomstick set on the chairs, using a sofa to cushion his landing. It was very clear to me that the sofa would not hold up under such treatment, so I called a halt to his indoor high-jumping. Instead, I invited him to go with me to a sporting goods store, where we purchased some foam padding to use for landing and high-jumping standards so he could move the activity out of doors.

After experimenting with the Fosbury flop, Lee decided to return to the western-roll technique that he had used previously. Still, through the end of the summer into the fall, he practiced high-jumping for many hours in our backyard.

One evening as I returned home from work, I found Lee practicing his jumping. I asked, "How high is the bar?"

He said, "Five feet, eight inches."

"Why that height?"

He answered, "You must clear that height to qualify for the state track meet."

"How are you doing?" I asked.

"I can clear it every time. I haven't missed."

My reply: "Let's raise the bar and see how well you do then."

He replied, "Then I might miss."

I queried, "If you don't raise the bar, how will you ever know your potential?"

So we started moving the bar up to five feet, ten inches; then to six feet; and so on, as he sought to improve. Lee became a better high jumper because he was not content with just clearing the minimum standard. He learned that even if it meant missing, he wanted to keep raising the bar to become the best high jumper he was capable of becoming.

Raising the bar for missionaries

Remembering this experience with my son brought to mind the message Elder M. Russell Ballard gave at the priesthood session of the October 2002 general conference, in which he challenged the young men of the Church to become the greatest generation of missionaries. He announced that the bar for the minimum standard of missionary service had been raised. He instructed the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood to prepare themselves more vigorously to reach this new and higher minimum standard. He also gave instructions to fathers, bishops, and stake presidents about helping young men prepare to serve full-time missions. (In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 49–53; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 46–49.)

In his concluding remarks at that priesthood session, President Hinckley commented on Elder Ballard's talk. He said:

"Elder Ballard has spoken to you concerning missionaries. I wish to endorse what he said. I hope that our young men, and our young women, will rise to the challenge he has set forth. We must raise the bar on the worthiness and qualifications of those who go into the world as

ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 57).

Soon afterward, in a letter dated December 11, 2002, the First Presidency instructed Church leaders about the principles of eligibility for full-time missionary service. The instructions stated:

“Full-time missionary service is a privilege for those who are called through inspiration by the President of the Church. Bishops and stake presidents have the serious responsibility to identify worthy, qualified members who are spiritually, physically, and emotionally prepared for this sacred service and who can be recommended without reservation. Those individuals not able to meet the physical, mental, and emotional demands of full-time missionary work are honorably excused and should not be recommended. They may be called to serve in other rewarding capacities.”

Set sights far above minimum standards

The bar was raised by the leaders of the Church, and now the minimum standard for participating in missionary work is absolute moral worthiness, physical health and strength, and intellectual, social, and emotional development. In every high-jumping competition there is a minimum height at which the competition starts. The high jumper cannot ask to start at a lower height. In the same way, you should not expect the standards to be lowered to allow you to serve a mission. If you want to be a missionary, you must be able to clear the minimum standards.

But once you reach those minimum standards, shouldn't you try to keep raising the bar? I ask you the same question I asked my son many years ago, “If you don't raise the bar, how will you ever know your potential?” My challenge to you is to recognize that a minimum standard exists—and you must reach it to

serve as a full-time missionary—but don't stop there. The greatest generation of missionaries will not reach its full potential unless it keeps raising the bar.

Improving physical preparation

Let me offer a few suggestions about what each of you can do to raise the bar even higher as you prepare for missionary service.

The minimum physical standard for full-time missionary service refers to a potential missionary's physical health and strength. For example, one of the questions on the missionary recommendation forms asks if you “can work 12 to 15 hours per day, walk 6 to 8 miles per day, ride a bicycle 10 to 15 miles per day, and climb stairs daily.” Missionary work is hard, and full-time missionaries must be in good physical condition to serve. Raising the bar to a higher physical standard could involve further physical conditioning.

It also could include improving your physical appearance. A missionary is expected to dress a certain way, projecting a clean-cut appearance that includes an appropriate haircut; being clean shaven; and wearing a clean white shirt, a tie, and a well-pressed suit—all the way down to a good shoe shine. Start now to prepare for a full-time mission by adopting the appearance of a full-time missionary.

Improving intellectual preparation

Raise the bar higher in your intellectual preparation. Take your schooling seriously. It is important to be able to read, speak, and write with intelligence. Expand your knowledge of the world around you by reading good books. Learn how to study. Then apply your improved study habits to learning the gospel of Jesus Christ. Consistently and regularly read from the Book of Mormon.

Don't neglect the opportunity of attending seminary and institute classes.

Participate and gain all you can from the scriptures taught in these great religious-education settings. They will prepare you to present the message of the restored gospel to those you have opportunity to meet. Study from *Preach My Gospel*, emphasizing the basic doctrines taught in chapter 3. Each time you are asked to speak in church or teach a family home evening lesson, focus on these basic doctrines.

In Doctrine and Covenants 11:21 the Lord tells us, “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.” The pre-missionary age is an ideal time to set the bar higher as you prepare your mind by acquiring the light and truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Improving emotional preparation

You must recognize that missionary service is emotionally demanding. Your support system is going to be withdrawn from you as you leave home and go out into the world. Many of the ways you use now to cope with emotional stress—like hanging out with friends, going off by yourself, playing video games, or listening to music—are not allowed by the rules of missionary conduct. There will be days of rejection and disappointment. Learn now about your emotional limits, and learn how to control your emotions under the circumstances you will face as a missionary. By doing this, you raise the bar to greater heights and, in effect, fortify yourself against emotional challenges during your missionary service.

Improving social preparation

While President Hinckley did not mention this, prospective missionaries also must be prepared with the social

skills needed to serve a mission. More and more, young people are isolating themselves from others by playing video games; wearing headphones; and interacting through cell phones, e-mail, text messaging, and so on instead of in person. Much of missionary work involves relating face-to-face with people, and unless you set the bar higher in the development of your social skills, you will find yourself underprepared. Let me offer a simple suggestion: get a job that involves interacting with people. As an increased motivation, set a goal to earn enough money from your part- or full-time work to pay for at least a significant part of your mission. I promise great blessings—social, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual blessings—to every young man who pays for a significant part of his mission.

The importance of personal worthiness

Personal worthiness is the minimum spiritual standard for serving a mission. This means that you are worthy in every way to make and to keep sacred temple covenants. Do not disqualify yourself from the blessings bestowed on those who serve in this very special calling by committing acts of transgression which will make you ineligible to serve.

Please recognize that while your teaching as a missionary may be persuasive, only the Spirit converts. *Preach My Gospel* gives a good description of what missionary work is all about. It states:

“As an authorized representative of Jesus Christ, you can teach people with power and authority that ‘redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah,’ and that no one ‘can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah’ (2 Nephi 2:6, 8)” ([2004], 2).

We remind you that where much is given, much is required. We issue the call again for all spiritually, physically, and

emotionally qualified young men to come forth prepared to become missionaries in the Church of Jesus Christ. Be certain that you easily clear the minimum standards for service as a missionary and that you are continually raising the bar. Prepare yourself to be more effective in this great calling.

May God bless you that this will be your desire as you leave this priesthood session of general conference and start now to prepare yourself for the glorious service which is ahead of you as a missionary of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Donald L. Hallstrom

A son's embarrassing procrastination

When our oldest child (who is now a father of three and sits in this priesthood congregation this evening) was 11 years of age, he was given an assignment, along with the other sixth graders of his school, to submit his favorite family recipe. As its contribution to a large spring fair, the sixth grade was producing a cookbook that would be distributed throughout the community. When the teacher announced the project and a deadline of a week from Friday, our son Brett immediately concluded there was plenty of time later to get the job done and dismissed it from his mind. Early the next week, when the teacher reminded the students of the Friday deadline, Brett decided he could easily complete the required task on Thursday night and until then he could occupy himself with other more enjoyable matters.

On the appointed Friday morning, the teacher directed the students to pass their recipes to the front of the class. Brett's procrastination had caused him to forget the assignment and be completely unprepared. Flustered, he turned to a fellow student seated nearby and confessed his problem. Trying to be helpful, the classmate said, "I brought an extra recipe. If you want, use one of mine." Brett quickly grabbed the recipe, wrote his name on it, and turned it in, feeling he had escaped any consequences related to his lack of preparation.

One evening several weeks later, I arrived home from work to freshen up before going to my evening Church meetings. A few days prior, I had been called as a stake president after serving several years as a bishop. We were somewhat known in our community as members of the Church who tried to live the tenets of our religion. "There's something you need to see," my wife, Diane, said as I walked through the door. She handed me a bound book with a page marked. Glancing at the cover, titled *Noelani School's Favorites—1985*, I turned to the identified page and read, "Hallstrom Family, Favorite Recipe—Bacardi Rum Cake."

Do not procrastinate spiritual matters

Many of us place ourselves in circumstances far more consequential than embarrassment because of our procrastination to become fully converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know what is right, but we delay full spiritual involvement because of laziness, fear, rationalization, or lack of faith. We convince ourselves that "someday I'm going to do it." However, for many, "someday" never comes, and even for others who eventually do make a change, there is an irretrievable loss of progress and surely regression.

As a partial self-appraisal of our spiritual-procrastination standing, what is our attitude when we attend the meetings of the Church? Is it to learn "by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118), which

seamlessly translates what we learn into what we do? Or do we have an “I’ve heard it all before” mentality that immediately blocks the Spirit’s access to our minds and our hearts and enables procrastination to become a major part of our character?

Of a prominent early investigator of the restored Church who covenanted that he would obey any command that the Lord would give him, it was said, “And he received the word with gladness, but straightway Satan tempted him; . . . and the cares of the world caused him to reject the word” (D&C 40:2). Contrast that with the Lord’s clear statement, “He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple” (D&C 41:5).

Alma, with deep emotion, declared, “And now, my brethren, I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance” (Alma 13:27).

Amulek, Alma’s friend and teaching companion, amplified the message by proclaiming:

“For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

“And now, . . . as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end” (Alma 34:32–33).

The lesson of the sloth

When I was the age of a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, it seemed every Saturday morning for months I was awakened to the sound of my father doing yard work outside my bedroom window. (It took me a long time to figure out why he always started his work under my window.) After a period of trying to ignore the noise, I would get up and join my

father in my weekly responsibility to help him maintain the yard surrounding our home.

Perhaps after a few mornings of my not arising very quickly, or due to other similar events when his repeated encouragement was needed before I acted, one day my father sat with me and showed me a large photograph of a sloth, an animal known for its laziness. Then he opened the Doctrine and Covenants and had me read, “For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a *slothful* and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward” (D&C 58:26; italics added). Since that day, that image and its lesson have been valuable assets in my life.

Do it now

One of President Spencer W. Kimball’s effective encouragements was the succinct “Do It.” He later expanded this to “Do It Now” to pointedly teach the need for timeliness.

President Kimball also taught the profound principle that procrastination leads to the loss of exaltation. He said:

“One of the most serious human defects in all ages is procrastination, an unwillingness to accept personal responsibilities *now*. . . . Many have allowed themselves to be diverted and have become . . . addicts to mental and spiritual indolence and to the pursuit of worldly pleasure” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 7).

Easy Street is a dead end

Many of us want the simple way—the process that will not require serious work and sacrifice. Well, I once thought I found it. Driving in the back of a verdant valley above the city of Honolulu, I looked up, and there it was—*Easy Street!* As I was dreaming of the life-changing

benefits of my discovery, I took out my camera to record the blissful moment. As I looked through the viewfinder, however, my focus literally and figuratively became clear. A large yellow sign returned me to reality—Easy Street was a dead end!

Procrastination may seem the easy way, as it momentarily removes the effort required to accomplish something of value. Ironically, in time, procrastination produces a heavy burden laced with guilt and a hollow lack of satisfaction. Temporal and, even more importantly, spiritual goals will not be achieved by procrastination.

Now is the time

Now is the time to exercise our faith. *Now is the time* to commit to righteousness. *Now is the time* to do whatever is required to resolve our undesired circumstances. *Now is the time* to reconcile with God through the merciful process of change afforded us by the Redeemer of mankind.

We appeal:

- To anyone who has received a witness of the truthfulness of the gospel and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and has not been baptized and confirmed.

- To any holder of the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood who, either by transgression or just doing nothing, is living in opposition to a sacred oath and covenant (see D&C 84:33–39).

- To any endowed member of the Church who does not currently qualify for a temple recommend.

- To any member who has been offended by the actions of another and has in any manner disassociated himself or herself from the Church.

- To anyone who is living a duplicitous life and is burdened by unresolved sin.

It is my witness that you and all of us can change, and it can be now. It may not be easy, but our afflictions can be “swallowed up in the joy of Christ” (Alma 31:38). I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder L. Whitney Clayton

Fishermen’s traps

Walking down a beach in the Caribbean one sunny morning some years ago, my wife and I saw several small fishing boats that had been pulled up onto the sand. When we stopped to look at the boats, I learned something about fishing that I have never forgotten. Instead of using nets, lines, or hooks, the local fishermen used simple traps made of wire mesh. Each trap was shaped like a box. The fishermen cut vertical openings about eight inches long on each side of the trap and then bent the cut wires inward, creating narrow slots through which fish could enter.

You can probably guess how a trap worked. The fishermen took a baited trap out to sea and lowered it to the bottom. When a dinner-sized fish came near the trap and sensed the bait, it would find an opening on the side of the trap and swim in, just squeezing between the cut wires. Then, when a trapped fish tried to swim out, it would discover that it was one thing to squeeze past the cut wires to get into the trap, but it was an entirely different thing to swim against those sharp ends to get out—it was caught. When the fishermen returned, they hauled the trap out of the water, and the trapped fish soon became a fresh seafood dinner.

David succumbs to the adversary's trap

There's an account in the Old Testament about someone who fell prey to a similar trap. That man was mighty King David, and what happened is one of the saddest stories in the scriptures.

"And it came to pass . . . at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they [fought against Ammon]. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

"And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon" (2 Samuel 11:1–2).

David learned the woman's name was Bathsheba. Her husband, Uriah, a soldier, was away fighting the Ammonites with the rest of the army, where David, their king, should have been. David had Bathsheba brought to the palace. They committed adultery, she became pregnant, and David began to fear that their adultery would be discovered. Hoping to cover his sin, David ordered that Uriah be sent back to Jerusalem. Uriah returned, but he refused on principle to go to his home to visit Bathsheba. David then arranged for Uriah to be slain in battle (see 2 Samuel 11:3–17). This series of dreadful decisions brought death to Uriah and misery to David, Bathsheba, and eventually the entire kingdom. With rich understatement, the Bible says, "The thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27).

Do you see how David got caught in this trap? He was on a rooftop courtyard of his palace, and looking below in a neighboring yard, he saw something he never should have seen. That was the adversary's bait. Modesty, chastity, and good judgment required that David turn away immediately and not watch, but he didn't do either thing. Instead, he allowed his mind to turn to forbidden fantasies,

those thoughts led to actions, and things quickly spiraled downward from bad to worse to fatal. David was trapped, and for him the consequences were eternal.

The trap of pornography

There's a spiritual snare today called pornography, and many, allured by its provocative messages, enter this deadly trap. Like any trap, it is easy to enter but difficult to escape. Some rationalize that they can casually view pornography without suffering its adverse effects. They say initially, "This isn't so bad," or, "Who cares? It won't make any difference," or, "I'm just curious." But they are mistaken. The Lord has warned, "And he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out" (D&C 42:23). That's exactly what happened to David: he looked at Bathsheba, lusted after her, and lost the Spirit. How different the rest of David's life might have been if he had just looked away.

Along with losing the Spirit, pornography users also lose perspective and proportion. Like King David, they try to conceal their sin, forgetting that nothing is hidden from the Lord (see 2 Nephi 27:27). Real consequences start to accumulate as self-respect ebbs away, sweet relationships sour, marriages wither, and innocent victims begin to pile up. Finding that what they have been viewing no longer satisfies, they experiment with more extreme images. They slowly grow addicted even if they don't know it or they deny it, and like David's, their behavior deteriorates as their moral standards disintegrate.

Traps of popular culture

As popular culture across the world degenerates, sleaze increasingly saturates the media, entertainment, advertising,

and the Internet. But popularity according to the world's prevailing norms is a very perilous scale to use to measure what's right or even what's not dangerous. A movie or television show may be well known and well liked by millions of viewers and nevertheless portray images and conduct that are pornographic. If something in a movie "isn't too bad," that automatically means that it isn't too good either. Thus, the fact that others watch movies or open Web sites that aren't appropriate is no excuse for us. Priesthood holders' lives should emulate the standards of the Savior and His Church, not the standards of the world.

Our quest for purity

The Savior taught, "And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (3 Nephi 12:8). The promises of the gospel are uplifting and ennobling, even exalting. We receive those promises by covenants which are conditioned on our living lives of purity and morality. When we live right and seek to purify our hearts, we draw closer to God and the Spirit. The condition of our heart determines how much evidence of divinity we see in the world now and qualifies us for the eventual realization of the promise that the pure "shall see God." Ours is a quest for purity. Thus, the Apostle John wrote:

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2–3).

Repentance can free us from traps

If you are already caught in the pornography trap, now is the time to free yourself with the help of the Savior. There is a way out, but you will need His help to escape. Your complete recovery will depend upon your complete repentance. Go to your bishop immediately. Seek his inspired guidance. He will help you put in place a plan of repentance that will restore your self-esteem and bring the Spirit back into your life. The healing power of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ reaches all afflictions, even this one. If you will turn to the Savior with all your heart and follow the counsel of your bishop, you will find the healing you need. The Savior will help you find the strength to resist temptation and the power to overcome addiction. As Moroni taught:

"Come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing. . . .

"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:30, 32).

May God bless our genuine efforts to be pure of heart and mind, that "virtue [may] garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly" (D&C 121:45). I testify of the redeeming love of the Savior and of the purifying power of His Atonement in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Walter F. González

Response to an earthquake in Peru

When President James E. Faust informed my wife and me that we would be transferred to Lima, Peru, we had no clue that on August 15, 2007, only a few days after our arrival, we would witness a devastating earthquake. More than 52,000 houses were destroyed by its sheer strength. Worse yet, it left more than 500 dead. Nine of them were members of the Church. Members in the Ica and Pisco stakes and the Cañete and Chinchá districts suffered the brunt of the tremor's aftermath.

The Church provided immediate relief to its members and those of other faiths. The morning after the quake, our members in the disaster area were receiving food and clothing, and before noon the Church was donating humanitarian aid to the nation's civil defense. Many members who were left homeless were sheltered in our meetinghouses. Despite how unexpected the catastrophe was, the priesthood organization functioned very well to bring relief to those less fortunate.

Stake and district presidents, along with bishops, went out to help their members only minutes after the earthquake. The terrible situation into which these priesthood leaders went is worth highlighting: it was nighttime; the lights were out; destruction abounded; and the earth would not stop shaking. These magnificent priesthood leaders left their families secured and walked out into the darkness, among people who wept, surrounded by destroyed houses. Thus our leaders went out during the night and the following days, facing frequent, strong aftershocks and a tsunami warning. They searched among the rubble, in the midst of commotion, risking their own lives to get to all the members. A bishop declared, "Without as much as a second thought, I ran in search of my Church brothers and sis-

ters and leaders." He found them. That's how he spent most of the night.

What motivated these leaders to go out and help others, even to the risking of their own lives? Certainly it was their great faith in the Savior and His Church. It was their understanding of their calling as leaders in the priesthood. It was gospel principles engraved in their lives before the earthquake, not during the crisis—engraved not with ink but with fire by the Spirit in the fleshy tablets of their hearts (see 2 Corinthians 3:3).

The possibility of an earthquake was always there. When or how it would hit, no one knew. When it came, it was devastating. But under the direction of the priesthood, the moment's challenge was faced. In many cases, when members were unable, the Lord made up the difference. Some members tell of seeing men in white helping to save their lives. Others heard guiding voices. Years of Church service were a preparatory school to becoming organized and helping one another.

Prepare for spiritual earthquakes

The same happens in our lives. We don't know when or how earthquakes will hit us. They likely won't be literal shakings of the earth, as happened in Peru, but rather quakes of temptations, sin, or trials, such as unemployment or serious sickness. Today is the time to prepare for when that type of quake comes. Today is the time to prepare—not during the crisis. What are we doing today to engraven in our souls the gospel principles that will uphold us in times of adversity?

For example, what did Joseph who was sold into Egypt plant in his soul to reply, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9) when avoiding pressure from Potiphar's wife to break the law of chastity?

What had Nephi planted previously in his soul so that when faced with a commandment from God he was able to answer, “I will go and do . . . , for I know”? (1 Nephi 3:7).

What these great leaders did was allow the Spirit to write gospel principles in their souls. This writing doesn’t happen overnight. Profoundly exposing our souls to the principles of righteousness will make a difference in our preparation for spiritual quakes. This exposure can be enhanced by pondering and by cutting off bad influences.

Study scriptures, teachings of prophets

Eternal principles will take root in us as we take time not only to read the teachings of the prophets and the scriptures but also to ponder them in the spirit of prayer. Nephi, for example, took time to sit and ponder. By so doing, he was exposed to doctrinal pearls (see 1 Nephi 11:1). Take the time to do what the Lord has directed us to do: “Treasure these things up in your hearts, and let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds” (D&C 43:34). In a world that increasingly demands more of our time, it is essential that we take time to ponder in our homes, so that we may understand divine doctrine and its principles. As the Savior said, “Go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon [these] things . . . that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow” (3 Nephi 17:3). By so doing, our exposure to doctrine and its principles will continue to be enhanced if we also hearken to the Lord’s admonition about bad influences.

Remove bad influences

It is very likely that there are people who pressure us to act or think in a way such that future quakes will find us inadequately prepared. Regarding this, the Savior gave us a key which will help us

better prepare today for the coming vicissitudes. He said, “Therefore, if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; or if thy brother offend thee and confess not and forsake not, he shall be cut off” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:40).

Fortunately the Savior Himself taught the meaning of cutting off our hand. It’s not about self-mutilation but rather about removing from our lives today those influences that keep us from preparing for tomorrow’s earthquakes. If I have friends who are bad influences for me, the advice is clear: “It is better for thee to enter into life without thy brother, than for thee and thy brother to be cast into hell” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:41). The Lord applied this same principle when warning Nephi to depart from his brethren who became a dangerous influence (see 2 Nephi 5:5).

It follows that such cutting off refers not only to friends but to every bad influence, such as inappropriate television shows, Internet sites, movies, literature, games, or music. Engraving in our souls this principle will help us to resist the temptation to yield to any bad influence.

Grow deep gospel roots

Enhancing our exposure to doctrine and its principles will make us priesthood holders with deep-rooted gospel values. We will be better prepared to face the tremors that will come without warning, when least expected. As priesthood holders, we will feel the promise made to the prophet Jeremiah extended to us: “For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land” (Jeremiah 1:18).

Then we’ll be able to express our gratitude as did Sister Linda Cruzado in Ica. After spending all night exposed to the elements, she wrote, “At daybreak the next day, our Heavenly Father showed His love through a warm sun that came

up very early, and at night He comforted us with a very starry night.”

Today is our time to be valiant and decide to give our souls a serious, profound exposure to our Savior’s teachings. I know that He lives, and after we do all we can, He will make up the difference. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing “High on the Mountain Top.” Following the singing, we will hear from President Henry B. Eyring, who was sustained this morning as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Eyring’s remarks, President Hinckley has asked that I address you.

The choir and congregation sang “High on the Mountain Top.”

President Henry B. Eyring

God helps the faithful priesthood holder

Tonight my thoughts are about a boy somewhere in the world. He is wondering if he can do what being a priesthood holder will require of him. I had that worry when I was about 13 or 14.

I had grown up in the mission field where there was only a tiny branch, which met in my home. Then my family moved to where there were stakes and large wards and chapels and quorums of boys who all seemed to know so much more than I did about what priesthood holders do. They had in that ward a complicated pattern for passing the sacrament. I felt almost certain that I would make a mistake when my turn to pass or prepare the sacrament came.

In my fear and desperation, I remember going outside the chapel to be alone. I was worried. I prayed for help and for some assurance that I would not fail in serving God in His priesthood.

It is now many years later. I have held the Melchizedek Priesthood for more than 50 years. But in the last few days I have prayed with that same pleading for help and assurance that I will not fail in the call which has come to me to serve

in the First Presidency. Others seem so much more able to serve and so much better prepared. But as I prayed this time, I think I could feel an answer that was probably sent to me outside the Yalecrest Ward chapel long ago. It is the same answer you can expect to get when you face a call to serve in the priesthood which seems beyond you.

Heavenly messages to help and guide you

The message may come in words to your mind or in a feeling or both. But it will include at least three things to give you assurance and guidance in what you must do in this seemingly overwhelming calling.

Recollection of God’s help in times past

First, the assurance will come from a memory of times Heavenly Father has helped you through dangers and difficulties. That’s happened to me in the last few days.

When I was young and still living in New Jersey, a large crowd of angry people gathered in front of our house. My mother went out to meet them, standing alone in this crowd of people who looked

very dangerous to me. I couldn't hear what she said, but after a few minutes they went away peacefully. I still remember that I had seen a miracle.

From when I was older, I have a more recent memory of a crowd of angry people I was called by the First Presidency to face who suddenly and inexplicably were touched by a spirit of calm and reconciliation.

Another time I was sent to speak to leaders of churches in the United States and ministers of those churches who had met in Minneapolis to deal with the problem of competition among churches.

When I arrived, I found that I was assigned to be a speaker. My subject was to be: Why there was a need for a restoration of the true Church through Joseph Smith. I was a last-minute substitute for Elder Neal A. Maxwell.

When I arrived in the city the night before the meetings and looked at the program, I called President Hinckley. I told him that the meetings were to last three days, that many talks were to be given at the same time, that the crowd could choose which one to attend. I told him that I thought if I told the truth, I feared that no one would come to my second session and that I might be coming home very quickly. I asked him what he thought I should do. He said, "Use your best judgment."

I prayed through the night. Somewhere near dawn, I was sure I was to say about the Restoration not, "This is what we believe happened to Joseph Smith and why we believe it happened," but, "This is what happened to Joseph Smith, and this is why the Lord did it." In the nighttime I was given no assurance of the outcome, just a clear direction—go forward.

To my amazement, after my talk the ministers lined up to speak to me. Every one of them, one after another coming to me, told essentially the same story. Each of them had met a member of the

Church somewhere in their lives that they admired. Many of them said that they lived in a community where the stake president had come to the aid of not just his members but of the community in a disaster. They asked if I could take back their greeting and their thanks to people I not only didn't know but had no hope of ever meeting.

By the end of the three days of meetings, larger and larger crowds were coming to hear the message of the restoration of the gospel and the true Church of Jesus Christ not because they believed the message but because they had seen goodness in people's lives—the fruits of that restoration.

As I have prayed in these last few nights, those and other memories flooded back with an assurance something like this: "Haven't I always looked after you? Think of the times I have led you beside the still waters. Remember the times I have set a table before you in the presence of your enemies. Remember, and fear no evil." (See Psalm 23.)

So to the new deacons: remember. He has always taken care of you from your childhood. To the new quorum presidents: remember. To you fathers with children who are a challenge to you: remember, and have no fear. What is impossible for you is possible with God's help in His service. And even when you were very small and in the years since, He has with His power and His Spirit gone before your face and been on your left hand and on your right hand when you went in His service (see D&C 84:88). You can receive assurance that God will watch over you if you pray for it in faith. I know that.

Forget yourself and pray for those you serve

The second part of the message you will receive as you pray for help in facing a hard assignment came to me very early Friday morning. I had prayed, as you will,

about overwhelming inadequacies. The answer was very clear and very direct and really a rebuke as I prayed. "Forget yourself; start praying about the people you are to serve." That does wonders, I can testify, to bring the Holy Ghost.

But be prepared to lose track of time as you pray. You will feel love for the people you are to serve. You will feel their needs, their hopes, their hurts, and those of their families. And as you pray, the circle will grow wider than you would imagine, to perhaps people not in your quorum or your family but to those they love across the world. When you forget yourself to pray for the circle of others, your service will be extended in your heart. It will change not only your service but your heart. That is because the Father and His Beloved Son, whom you are called to serve, know and love so many people your service will touch, however limited to a few it may seem to be to you.

Go to work

The third and final message you can watch for when you pray for help in a hard priesthood assignment is this one—I got this one as well—go to work. Priesthood power is given you to bless others. And that always takes moving out and doing something, usually something hard to do. So you can expect, in addition to assurance of God's help and the command to forget yourself, the clear prompting by the Holy Ghost to go and do something which will bless someone's life. That may be as obvious as going prayerfully to visit a person or a family or a quorum member whom you are assigned to serve. For a father it may be to correct one of his children.

Whether what you do is to correct or to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, you will do it better if you remember what success will be. You are to help Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, make eternal life possible for those you serve.

To do that, the Spirit must take a testimony down into their hearts. And that testimony has to lead them to choose to keep the commandments of God, whatever storms and temptations may come.

As you keep that in mind, the Spirit will guide you in teaching and correcting with priesthood power. You will keep yourself clean so that you will teach with the Spirit. You will pray for the Spirit to tell you when to correct and how to correct and how to show an increase of love (see D&C 121:43–44). Whatever you do in your priesthood service can be guided and measured by how well it could or did help the person take a testimony of the truth down into his or her life and heart enough for the Atonement to work and keep working.

It will never be easy

You can get assurance in your service. You can forget yourself and begin to pray for and love those you are to serve. And you can choose what to do and measure success by the degree to which it changes the hearts of the people you serve.

But it is never going to be easy for you or for those you serve. There will always be pain in service and in the repentance necessary to bring the power of the Atonement to change hearts. That is in the nature of what you are called to do. Think of the Savior, whose service you are in. At what point in His mortal life can you see an instance when it was easy for Him? Did He ask easy things of His disciples then? Then why should it ever be easy in His service or for His disciples?

The reason for that is suggested by the phrase "a broken heart," about which you have been taught so well today. The scriptures sometimes speak of people's hearts being softened, but more often the words describing the state we seek for ourselves and for those we serve are a "broken heart." This may help us accept that our call to serve and the need for the

repentance we need and seek will not be easy. And it helps us understand better why testimony needs to go down into the hearts of our people. Faith that Jesus Christ atoned for their sins has to go down into the heart—a broken heart.

Invite the Spirit into your life

Now, tonight let us decide together what we are going to do. All of us, whatever our callings may be, face tasks that are beyond our own powers. I do and you do. That's true from the simple fact that success is to get testimony down into the hearts of people. We can't make that happen. Even God won't force that on anyone.

So success requires people we serve to choose to accept the testimony of the Spirit into their hearts. The Spirit is ready. But many people aren't ready to invite the Spirit. Our task, which is in our power, is to invite the Spirit into our lives so that people we serve will want to have the fruits of the Spirit in their lives—the fruits that they can see in ours.

Control what you see and what you say

This leads me to some suggestions of what we can choose to do or not to do. Some things we can do invite the Spirit. Some force the Spirit to withdraw. You know that from your own experience.

No priesthood holder who wants to succeed will be careless about where his eyes may go. Choosing to look at images which incite lust will cause the Spirit to withdraw. You have been warned by Elder Clayton as well as you may ever be warned about the dangers of the Internet and the media in putting pornographic images before us. But immodesty is now so common that everyday life requires discipline—a conscious choice not to linger watching whatever might create in us feelings which would repel the Spirit.

The same care is required in what we say. We cannot hope to speak for the Lord unless we are careful with our speech. Vulgarity and profanity offend the Spirit. Just as immodesty seems to be more common, so does vulgar and profane language. It used to be that only in certain places and with certain groups would we hear the name of the Lord taken in vain or hear vulgar words and crude humor. Now it seems to be everywhere and, for many, socially acceptable, where once it was not.

You can decide—and you must—to change what you say even when you can't control what others say. But I know from my own experience that even in such a terrible situation you can count on God's help. Years ago I was an air force officer serving for two years in an office with a marine colonel, an army colonel, and a grizzled navy commander. They had learned to speak in war and in peace in a way which offended me, and I know it repelled the Holy Ghost. I was at the time serving as a district missionary, trying in the evenings to go out to find people and teach them under the influence of the Holy Ghost. It was very hard. I was only a lieutenant. They were very senior to me. I had no way of changing their language. But I prayed for help. I don't know how God did it, but in time their language changed. Slowly the profanity disappeared and then the vulgarity. Only when they drank liquor did it come back, but that was in the evenings, so I could excuse myself for missionary work.

Let virtue garnish thy thoughts

You can have memories like that to sustain your faith when life puts you in difficult places. God helps the faithful priesthood holder who decides to see and say no evil, even in a wicked world. It will not be easy. It never is. But you can have the promise fulfilled for you as I know

that it can be for me: “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven” (D&C 121:45).

I testify that I know that you and I hold the priesthood of God and that He will answer our prayers with sweet assurance and with the help to serve Him better. I so promise you and testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Thomas S. Monson

A royal priesthood

Brethren, as I gaze from one end to the other of this majestic building, I can only say, you are an inspiring sight to behold. It is amazing to realize that in thousands of chapels throughout the world, others of you—holders of the priesthood of God—are receiving this broadcast by way of satellite transmission. Nationalities vary and languages are many, but a common thread binds us together. We have been entrusted to bear the priesthood and to act in the name of God. We are the recipients of a sacred trust. Much is expected of us.

We who hold the priesthood of God and honor it are among those who have been reserved for this special period in history. The Apostle Peter described us in the second chapter of I Peter, the ninth verse:

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

How might you and I qualify ourselves to be worthy of that designation, “a royal priesthood”? What are the characteristics of a true son of the living God? Tonight I would like us to consider just some of those very characteristics.

Times may change, circumstances may alter, but the marks of a true holder of the priesthood of God remain constant.

The mark of vision

May I suggest that first of all every one of us develop *the mark of vision*. One writer said that the door of history turns on small hinges, and so do people’s lives. If we were to apply that maxim to our lives, we could say that we are the result of many small decisions. In effect, we are the product of our choices. We must develop the capacity to recall the past, to evaluate the present, and to look into the future in order to accomplish in our lives what the Lord would have us do.

You young men holding the Aaronic Priesthood should have the ability to envision the day when you will hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and then prepare yourselves as deacons, as teachers, as priests to receive the holy Melchizedek Priesthood of God. You have the responsibility to be ready, when you receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to respond to a call to serve as a missionary by accepting it and then fulfilling it. How I pray that every boy and every man will have *the mark of vision*.

The mark of effort

The second principle I should like to emphasize as a characteristic of a true priesthood holder of God is *the mark of effort*. It is not enough to *want* to make the effort and to *say* we’ll make the effort. We must actually *make* the effort. It’s in

the *doing*, not just the *thinking*, that we accomplish our goals. If we constantly put our goals off, we will never see them fulfilled. Someone put it this way: Live only for tomorrow, and you will have a lot of empty yesterdays today.¹

Garry Bjorklund's determination

In July of 1976, runner Garry Bjorklund was determined to qualify for the U.S. Olympic team's 10,000-meter race which would be run at the Montreal Olympics. Halfway through the grinding qualifying race, however, he lost his left shoe. What would you and I do if that were our experience? I suppose he could have given up and stopped. He could have blamed his bad luck and lost the opportunity of participating in the greatest race of his life, but this champion athlete did not do that. He ran on without his shoe. He knew that he would have to run faster than he had ever run in his life. He knew that his competitors now had an advantage that they did not have at the beginning of the race. Over that cinder track he ran, with one shoe on and one shoe off, finishing third and qualifying for the opportunity to participate in the race for the gold medal. His own running time was the best he had ever recorded. He put forth the effort necessary to achieve his goal.

As priesthood holders we may find that there are times in our lives when we falter, when we become weary or fatigued, or when we suffer a disappointment or a heartache. When that happens, I would hope that we will persevere with even greater effort toward our goal.

Service as a young bishop

At one time or another each of us will be called to fill a position in the Church, whether as a deacons quorum president, a teachers quorum secretary, a priesthood adviser, a class teacher, or a bishop. I could name more, but you get the picture.

I was just 22 years of age when I was called to be the bishop of the Sixth-Seventh Ward in Salt Lake City. With 1,080 members in the ward, a great deal of effort was required to make certain that every matter which needed to be handled was taken care of and every member of the ward felt included and watched over. Although the assignment was monumental in scope, I did not let it overwhelm me. I went to work, as did others, and did all I could to serve. Each of us can do the same, regardless of the calling or assignment.

Just last year I decided to see how many residential dwellings were still standing from the period between 1950 and 1955 when I served as bishop of that same area. I drove slowly around each of the blocks that once comprised the ward. I was surprised to observe in my search that of all the houses and apartment buildings where our 1,080 members had lived, only three dwellings were still standing. At one of those houses, the grass was overgrown, the trees unpruned, and I found no one was living there. Of the other two houses remaining, one was boarded up and unoccupied, and the other housed some sort of a modest business office.

I parked my car, turned off the ignition, and just sat there for a long while. I could picture in my mind each house, each apartment building, each member who lived there. While the homes and the buildings were gone, the memories were still very vivid concerning the families who resided in each dwelling. I thought of the words of the author James Barrie, who wrote that God gave us memories that we might have June roses in the December of our lives.² How grateful I was for the opportunity to serve in that assignment. Such can be the blessing of each of us if we put forth in our assignments our very best efforts.

The mark of effort is required of every priesthood holder.

The mark of faith

The third principle I would like to emphasize is *the mark of faith*. We must have faith in ourselves, faith in the ability of our Heavenly Father to bless us and to guide us in our endeavors. Many years ago the writer of a psalm wrote a beautiful truth: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes."³ In other words, let us put our confidence in the ability of the Lord to guide us. Friendships, we know, may alter and change, but the Lord is constant.

Shakespeare, in his play *King Henry the Eighth*, taught this truth through Cardinal Wolsey—a man who enjoyed great prestige and pride because of his friendship with the king. When the friendship ended, Cardinal Wolsey was stripped of his authority, resulting in a loss of prominence and prestige. He was one who had gained everything and then lost all. In the sorrow of his heart, he spoke a real truth to his servant, Cromwell. He said:

O Cromwell, Cromwell!
Had I but served my God with half the
zeal
I served my king, He would not in
mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.⁴

I trust we shall have *the mark of faith* in every heart represented here tonight.

The mark of virtue

I add to my list *the mark of virtue*. The Lord indicated that we should let virtue garnish our thoughts unceasingly.⁵

I recall a priesthood meeting held in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City when I was a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood. The President of the Church was speaking to the priesthood, and he made a statement I have never forgotten. He said, in essence, that men who commit sexual sin

or other sins do not do so in the twinkling of an eye. He emphasized that our actions are preceded by our thoughts, and when we commit sin, it is because we have first thought of committing that particular sin. Then the President declared that the way to avoid sin is to keep our thinking pure. The scripture tells us that as we think in our hearts, so are we.⁶ We must have *the mark of virtue*.

If we are to be missionaries in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father, we must be entitled to the companionship of His Holy Spirit, and we have been told precisely that His Spirit will not dwell in impure or unholy tabernacles.

The mark of prayer

Finally, may I add *the mark of prayer*. The desire to communicate with one's Heavenly Father is a mark of a true priesthood holder of God.

As we offer unto the Lord our family and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him. Let us remember the injunction of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews: "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."⁷

If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now. William Cowper declared, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees."⁸ Those who feel that prayer might denote a physical weakness should consider that a man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees.

May we ever remember:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast. . . .

O thou by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way!
The path of prayer thyself hast trod;
Lord, teach us how to pray.⁹

As we cultivate *the mark of prayer*, we will receive the blessings our Heavenly Father has for us.

In conclusion, may we have *vision*. May we put forth *effort*. May we exemplify *faith* and *virtue* and ever make *prayer* a part of our lives. Then we shall indeed be a royal priesthood. This would be my prayer, my personal prayer this evening, and I offer it from my heart in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Meredith Willson and Franklin Lacey, *The Music Man* (1957).
2. See Laurence J. Peter, comp., *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time* (1977), 335.
3. Psalm 118:8–9.
4. Act 3, scene 2, lines 455–58.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
6. See Proverbs 23:7.

7. Hebrews 11:6.

8. In William Neil, comp., *Concise Dictionary of Religious Quotations* (1974), 144.

9. “Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire,” *Hymns*, no. 145.

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to this father-and-son choir for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

Our concluding speaker for this session will be President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “We Ever Pray for Thee.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert K. Dellenbach, an emeritus member of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Slow to anger

My beloved brethren, wherever you may be, here in the Conference Center or in a Church hall far away across the seas, what a remarkable thing it is that we can speak in this Conference Center and that you can hear what we say in a place as far away as Cape Town, South Africa.

I have chosen tonight to speak to the subject of anger. I realize that this is a little unusual, but I think it is timely.

A proverb in the Old Testament states, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

It is when we become angry that we get into trouble. The road rage that affects our highways is a hateful expression of anger. I dare say that most of the inmates of our prisons are there because

they did something when they were angry. In their wrath they swore, they lost control of themselves, and terrible things followed, even murder. There were moments of offense followed by years of regret.

School thy feelings

This story is told concerning Charles W. Penrose. He was a convert to the Church, and he served as a missionary in England for some 11 years. When he was released, he sold some of his belongings to pay for his trip to Zion. Some of the Saints observing him said that he was taking Church property.

This angered him so, that he went upstairs in his residence, sat down, and wrote these verses, which are familiar to you. (See Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages* [1988], 323.)

School thy feelings, O my brother;
 Train thy warm, impulsive soul.
 Do not its emotions smother,
 But let wisdom's voice control.
 School thy feelings; there is power
 In the cool, collected mind.
 Passion shatters reason's tower,
 Makes the clearest vision blind. . . .

School thy feelings; condemnation
 Never pass on friend or foe,
 Though the tide of accusation
 Like a flood of truth may flow.
 Hear defense before deciding,
 And a ray of light may gleam,
 Showing thee what filth is hiding
 Underneath the shallow stream.
 School thy feelings, O my brother;
 Train thy warm, impulsive soul.
 Do not its emotions smother,
 But let wisdom's voice control.
 ["School Thy Feelings," *Hymns*, no. 336]

Many years ago I worked for one of our railroads. A switchman was aimlessly strolling about the platform one day. I asked him to move a car to another track. He exploded. He threw his cap on the pavement and jumped up and down on it, swearing like a drunken sailor. I stood there and laughed at his childish behavior. Noting my laughter, he began to laugh at his own foolishness. He then quietly climbed on the switch engine, drove it over to the empty car, and moved it to an empty track.

I thought of a verse from Ecclesiastes: "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

Anger is the mother of a whole brood of evil actions.

Divorce is often the fruit of anger

I clipped from the morning newspaper a story that led off with this statement:

"More than half the Americans who might have celebrated their 25th wedding

anniversaries since 2000 were divorced, separated or widowed before reaching that milestone" (Sam Roberts, "Most U.S. Marriages Don't Get to Silver," *Deseret Morning News*, Sept. 20, 2007, p. A1).

Widowhood of course is beyond the control of the parties, but divorce and separation are not.

Divorce too often is the bitter fruit of anger. A man and a woman fall in love, as they say; each is wonderful in the sight of the other; they feel romantic affection for no one else; they stretch their finances to buy a diamond ring; they marry. All is bliss—that is, for a season. Then little inconsequential activities lead to criticism. Little flaws are magnified into great torrents of faultfinding; they fall apart, they separate, and then with rancor and bitterness they divorce.

This cycle is repeated again and again in thousands of cases. It is tragic, and as I have said, it is in most cases the bitter fruit of anger.

I think of my own marriage. My eternal companion passed away three and a half years ago. But we lived together for 67 years. I have no recollection of ever having a quarrel with her. She traveled with me and spoke on every continent, pleading for the exercise of restraint, kindness, and love.

Do not be easily offended

A small publication that came to me some years ago carried the following:

Once a man who had been slandered by a newspaper came to Edward Everett asking what to do about it. Said Everett:

"Do nothing! Half the people who bought the paper never saw the article. Half of those who saw it, did not read it. Half of those who read it, did not understand it. Half of those who understood it, did not believe it. Half of those who believed it are of no account anyway" ("Sunny Side of the Street," Nov. 1989; see also Zig Ziglar, *Staying Up, Up, Up in a Down, Down World* [2000], 174).

So many of us make a great fuss of matters of small consequence. We are so easily offended. Happy is the man who can brush aside the offending remarks of another and go on his way.

“A little piece of string”

Grudges, if left to fester, can become serious maladies. Like a painful ailment they can absorb all of our time and attention. Guy de Maupassant has written an interesting chronicle that illustrates this.

It concerns Master Hauchecome, who on market day went to town. He was afflicted with rheumatism, and as he stumbled along he noticed a piece of string on the ground in front of him. He picked it up and carefully put it in his pocket. He was seen doing so by his enemy, the harness maker.

At the same time it was reported to the mayor that a pocketbook containing money had been lost. It was assumed that what Hauchecome had picked up was the pocketbook, and he was accused of taking it. He vehemently denied the charge. A search of his clothing disclosed only the piece of string, but the slander against him had so troubled him that he became obsessed with it. Wherever he went he bothered to tell people about it. He became such a nuisance that they cried out against him. It sickened him.

“His mind kept growing weaker and about the end of December he took to his bed.

“He passed away early in January, and, in the ravings of [his] death agony, he protested his innocence, repeating:

“‘A little [piece] of string—a little [piece] of string. See, here it is, [Mister Mayor.]’” (See “The Piece of String,” <http://www.online-literature.com/Maupassant/270/>.)

The story is told that reporters were interviewing a man on his birthday. He had reached an advanced age. They asked him how he had done it.

He replied, “When my wife and I were married, we determined that if we ever got in a quarrel, one of us would leave the house. I attribute my longevity to the fact that I have breathed good fresh air throughout my married life.”

Anger may be justified in some circumstances. The scriptures tell us that Jesus drove the moneychangers from the temple, saying, “My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:13).

But even this was spoken more as a rebuke than as an outburst of uncontrolled anger.

Speak words of love, peace, and respect

Now, my dear brethren, in closing I plead with you to control your tempers, to put a smile upon your faces, which will erase anger; speak out with words of love and peace, appreciation, and respect. If you will do this, your lives will be without regret. Your marriages and family relationships will be preserved. You will be much happier. You will do greater good. You will feel a sense of peace that will be wonderful.

May the Lord bless you and inspire you to walk without anger, without bitterness of any kind, but to reach out to others with expressions of friendship, appreciation, and love. This is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “We Ever Pray for Thee.”

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 177th Semi-annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 7, 2007. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen and Andrew Unsworth were the organists. The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 177th Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the public broadcast facilities who are making this conference available.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen and Andrew Unsworth at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" and will now favor us with "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father." The invocation will then be offered by Elder W. Rolfe Kerr, an emeritus member of the Seventy.

The choir sang "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father."

Elder W. Rolfe Kerr offered the invocation.

The choir sang "A Child's Prayer."

President Hinckley

The choir has just sung "A Child's Prayer." We will now be pleased to hear from President Henry B. Eyring, newly sustained Second Counselor in the Presidency. Following his remarks, we shall hear from Elder Quentin L. Cook, sustained yesterday morning as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We shall then be pleased to hear from Elder Claudio R. M. Costa of the Presidency of the Seventy and Sister Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president.

After Sister Beck, the choir and congregation will sing "I Am a Child of God." Elder Christoffel Golden Jr. of the Seventy will then address us, after which we shall hear from Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

President Henry B. Eyring

I was grateful for the choir in their broadcast this morning, which was about the Savior, and grateful to see that the words of one of the songs they sang, "This Is the Christ," were written by President James E. Faust. As I sat down next

to Brother Newell, I leaned over to him and asked, "How are your children?" He said, "When President Faust sat in that chair, that's what he always asked." I'm not surprised, because President Faust was always a perfect example of a disciple

that was described in *Music and the Spoken Word* today. I always felt that when I grew up, I wanted to be like President Faust. There may still be time.

Looking for the hand of God

When our children were very small, I started to write down a few things about what happened every day. Let me tell you how that got started. I came home late from a Church assignment. It was after dark. My father-in-law, who lived near us, surprised me as I walked toward the front door of my house. He was carrying a load of pipes over his shoulder, walking very fast and dressed in his work clothes. I knew that he had been building a system to pump water from a stream below us up to our property.

He smiled, spoke softly, and then rushed past me into the darkness to go on with his work. I took a few steps toward the house, thinking of what he was doing for us, and just as I got to the door, I heard in my mind—not in my own voice—these words: “I’m not giving you these experiences for yourself. Write them down.”

I went inside. I didn’t go to bed. Although I was tired, I took out some paper and began to write. And as I did, I understood the message I had heard in my mind. I was supposed to record for my children to read, someday in the future, how I had seen the hand of God blessing our family. Grandpa didn’t have to do what he was doing for us. He could have had someone else do it or not have done it at all. But he was serving us, his family, in the way covenant disciples of Jesus Christ always do. I knew that was true. And so I wrote it down, so that my children could have the memory someday when they would need it.

I wrote down a few lines every day for years. I never missed a day no matter how tired I was or how early I would have to start the next day. Before I would write,

I would ponder this question: “Have I seen the hand of God reaching out to touch us or our children or our family today?” As I kept at it, something began to happen. As I would cast my mind over the day, I would see evidence of what God had done for one of us that I had not recognized in the busy moments of the day. As that happened, and it happened often, I realized that trying to remember had allowed God to show me what He had done.

More than gratitude began to grow in my heart. Testimony grew. I became ever more certain that our Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers. I felt more gratitude for the softening and refining that come because of the Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ. And I grew more confident that the Holy Ghost can bring all things to our remembrance—even things we did not notice or pay attention to when they happened.

The years have gone by. My boys are grown men. And now and then one of them will surprise me by saying, “Dad, I was reading in my copy of the journal about when . . .” and then he will tell me about how reading of what happened long ago helped him notice something God had done in his day.

Recognize and remember God’s kindness

My point is to urge you to find ways to recognize and remember God’s kindness. It will build your testimonies. You may not keep a journal. You may not share the record you keep with those you love and serve. But you and they will be blessed as you remember what the Lord has done. You remember that song we sometimes sing: “Count your many blessings; name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.”¹

It won’t be easy to remember. Living as we do with a veil over our eyes, we cannot remember what it was like to be with our Heavenly Father and His Be-

loved Son, Jesus Christ, in the premortal world; nor can we see with our physical eyes or with reason alone the hand of God in our lives. Seeing such things takes the Holy Ghost. And it is not easy to be worthy of the Holy Ghost's companionship in a wicked world.

That is why forgetting God has been such a persistent problem among His children since the world began. Think of the times of Moses, when God provided manna and in miraculous and visible ways led and protected His children. Still, the prophet warned the people who had been so blessed, as prophets always have warned and always will:

"Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life."²

Challenges to remembering God

And the challenge to remember has always been the hardest for those who are blessed abundantly. Those who are faithful to God are protected and prospered. That comes as the result of serving God and keeping His commandments. But with those blessings comes the temptation to forget their source. It is easy to begin to feel the blessings were granted not by a loving God on whom we depend but by our own powers. The prophets have repeated this lament over and over:

"And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

"Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their

enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity."

And the prophet goes on to say: "Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths!"³

Sadly, prosperity is not the only reason people forget God. It can also be hard to remember Him when our lives go badly. When we struggle, as so many do, in grinding poverty, or when our enemies prevail against us, or when sickness is not healed, the enemy of our souls can send his evil message that there is no God or that if He exists, He does not care about us. Then it can be hard for the Holy Ghost to bring to our remembrance the lifetime of blessings the Lord has given us from our infancy and in the midst of our distress.

Holy Ghost is the key to remembering

There is a simple cure for the terrible malady of forgetting God, His blessings, and His messages to us. Jesus Christ promised it to His disciples when He was about to be crucified, resurrected, and then taken away from them to ascend in glory to His Father. They were concerned to know how they would be able to endure when He was no longer with them.

Here is the promise. It was fulfilled for them then. It can be fulfilled for all of us now:

"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”⁴

The key to the remembering that brings and maintains testimony is receiving the Holy Ghost as a companion. It is the Holy Ghost who helps us see what God has done for us. It is the Holy Ghost who can help those we serve to see what God has done for them.

Heavenly Father has given a simple pattern for us to receive the Holy Ghost not once but continually in the tumult of our daily lives. The pattern is repeated in the sacramental prayer: We promise that we will always remember the Savior. We promise to take His name upon us. We promise to keep His commandments. And we are promised that if we do that, we will have His Spirit to be with us.⁵ Those promises work together in a wonderful way to strengthen our testimonies and in time, through the Atonement, to change our natures as we keep our part of the promise.

It is the Holy Ghost who testifies that Jesus Christ is the Beloved Son of a Heavenly Father who loves us and wants us to have eternal life with Him in families. With even the beginning of that testimony, we feel a desire to serve Him and to keep His commandments. When we persist in doing that, we receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost to give us power in our service. We come to see the hand of God more clearly, so clearly that in time we not only remember Him, but we come to love Him and, through the power of the Atonement, become more like Him.

Getting the process started

You might ask, “But how does this process get started in someone who knows nothing about God and claims no memory of spiritual experiences at all?” Everyone has had spiritual experiences

that they may not have recognized. Every person, upon entering the world, is given the Spirit of Christ. How that spirit works is described in the book of Moroni:

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

“But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him. . . .

“Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.”⁶

So, even before people receive the right to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, when they are confirmed as members of the Church, and even before the Holy Ghost confirms truth to them before baptism, they have spiritual experiences. The Spirit of Christ has already, from their childhood, invited them to do good and warned them against evil. They have memories of those experiences even if they have not recognized their source. That memory will come back to them as missionaries or we teach them the word of God and they hear it. They will remember the feeling of joy or sorrow when they are taught the truths of the gospel. And that memory of the Spirit of Christ will soften their hearts to allow the Holy Ghost to testify to them. That will lead them to keep commandments and want to take the name of the

Savior upon them. And when they do, in the waters of baptism, and as they hear the words in confirmation “receive the Holy Ghost” spoken by an authorized servant of God, the power to always remember God will be increased.

See God’s hand and preserve the memory

I testify to you that the warm feelings you have had as you have listened to truth being spoken in this conference are from the Holy Ghost. The Savior, who promised that the Holy Ghost would come, is the beloved, glorified Son of our Heavenly Father.

Tonight, and tomorrow night, you might pray and ponder, asking the questions: Did God send a message that was

just for me? Did I see His hand in my life or the lives of my children? I will do that. And then I will find a way to preserve that memory for the day that I, and those that I love, will need to remember how much God loves us and how much we need Him. I testify that He loves us and blesses us, more than most of us have yet recognized. I know that is true, and it brings me joy to remember Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns*, no. 241.
2. Deuteronomy 4:9.
3. Helaman 12:1–2, 5.
4. John 14:25–26.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
6. Moroni 7:16–17, 19.

Elder Quentin L. Cook

Live by faith, not by fear

Dear brothers and sisters, I join with you in expressing my love and sustaining support to President Eyring and his family. President Hinckley extended this call to serve in the Quorum of the Twelve late Thursday afternoon. I cannot possibly articulate the kaleidoscope of feelings I have experienced since then. There have been sleepless nights and much prayer. My spirits have been buoyed, however, by the knowledge that President Hinckley is the prophet and that the membership of the Church will be praying for me and my family.

To say that I feel deeply inadequate would be an understatement. When I was called as a General Authority in April of 1996, I also felt unequal to the calling. Elder Neal A. Maxwell reassured me then that the most important qualification for all of us serving in the kingdom is to be comfortable in bearing

witness of the divinity of the Savior. A peace came over me at that time and has stayed with me since because I love the Savior and have had spiritual experiences that allow me to testify of Him. I rejoice in the opportunity to bear witness of Jesus Christ in all the world (see D&C 107:23), notwithstanding my inadequacies.

In Doctrine and Covenants 68, verses 5 and 6, we read:

“Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye servants.

“Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come.”

I seek the companionship of the Holy Ghost as I speak with you this Sabbath morning.

The overwhelming feeling that I have in receiving this call is that we must live

by faith and not by fear. In 2 Timothy, the Apostle Paul references the faith of Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice. Paul writes:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Gratitude for family and friends

In my own case, I respectfully acknowledge ancestors now on the other side of the veil who gave everything asked of them to build the kingdom of God upon the earth.

I am grateful that all my life I have been surrounded by those who love the Savior. My heart is full of appreciation for my family. My wife, Mary, has been the joy of my life. Her spiritual strength, righteous example, sense of humor, and loving support have blessed me throughout my life. Our three children and their spouses have been sources of great personal satisfaction and, together with our nine grandchildren, have been such a blessing to us. Their faith and prayers and the goodness of their lives have been a great comfort to Mary and me.

When I think back to my youth in Logan, Utah (Elder Perry's fabled Cache Valley), I realize how fortunate I was to be reared in a goodly home—to have a righteous mother who was full of faith, a loving father, an older brother who has been an extraordinary example to me as well as a friend and counselor, and a younger sister who has been loving and supportive. How fortunate also to have had talented and devoted Church leaders, teachers, coaches, and friends who were wonderful examples to me.

Gratitude for mission

As a young man I had the opportunity to serve in the British Mission, which was a seminal, defining event in my life. The influence of a valiant mission president is one of the great miracles of the

restored gospel. A few weeks ago I received a birthday card at Church headquarters from a woman I helped teach in Gloucester, England, many years ago. I had lost contact with her. She informed me that she and her husband are both very active members and have 6 children and 20 grandchildren, all born in the covenant. It may be the best birthday card I have ever received.

Mary and I left Utah so I could attend law school in Palo Alto, California. We were planning to return to Utah after graduation, but the Spirit directed that we stay in California. We lived in California for 33 years and raised our family there. We both had many opportunities to serve. We loved the diversity of the members and their commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I will be eternally grateful for the wonderful Latter-day Saints in California who have been such a positive influence in my life.

Gratitude for Church leaders

These last 11½ years of service as a Seventy have been truly rewarding ones. As I leave that quorum, I want my fellow Brethren to know of my love and appreciation for their dedication and loyalty to the kingdom of God on the earth—for their faithfulness and good works. I want them to know of the joy it has been to serve with them.

I love the Brethren we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators with all my heart. I've tried to serve honorably and lighten their responsibilities in any way I could. I'm grateful to the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve for their lives of goodness and example, their patience, their teaching, their kindness, their devotion to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and His restored gospel. I am grateful that God called Joseph Smith to be a prophet through whom the fulness of the gospel was restored to earth.

Gratitude for faithful Saints worldwide

My experience as a General Authority has filled my heart with appreciation for the faith and goodness of the Latter-day Saints all over the world. We served for two years in the Philippines. In April of 1961, President Hinckley, then an Assistant to the Twelve, sent the first missionaries to Manila. There was only one Filipino priesthood holder in the Philippines. Today there are almost 600,000 members. Their lives are not easy, and they lack many material things, but they love the Savior. The gospel is having a tremendous impact in improving their lives. What a blessing to serve in their midst.

We also served for three years in the Pacific Islands. It is significant that almost 25 percent of all the Polynesians in the world are members of the Church. Their faith and spirituality are legendary. Sister Cook and I were in Vava'u in the Tongan islands on one occasion. I had just spoken about following the prophet in the general session of stake conference. At the luncheon following the conference, I sat next to a distinguished elderly patriarch. He indicated how grateful he was to hear what the prophet was teaching. He gave me the following account.

The gospel is lifesaving fresh water

Vava'u, which is a relatively small island, usually has sufficient rain, but periodically there are severe droughts. The island has long inlets or bays, almost like sounds, that curl into the island below steep hills. When drought left the village without water, there was only one way they could obtain fresh water and stay alive. Over the centuries they had found that fresh water traveled down through rock formations inside the mountains and came up in a few spots in the sea.

The Tongan men would set off in their small boats with a wise elder standing at one end of the boat looking for just

the right spot. The strong young men in the boat stood ready with containers to dive deep into the seawater. When they reached the appropriate spot, the wise man would raise both arms to heaven. That was the signal. The strong young men would dive off the boat as deep as they could and fill the containers with fresh springwater. This old patriarch likened this lifesaving tradition to the living waters of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the wise man to God's prophet here on earth. He noted that the water was pure, fresh, and, in their drought condition, lifesaving. But it was not easy to find. It was not visible to the untrained eye. This patriarch wanted to know everything the prophet was teaching.

We live in a precarious time. The world is in desperate need of the fresh springwater, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. We should listen intently to the prophet as we make choices. My own informal records indicate that President Hinckley has continually emphasized faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That has been followed by his emphasis on strengthening families and having family religious observance in the home. Over and over again he has told us that if we would live a principle, we would gain a testimony of the truthfulness of that principle, which would in turn increase our faith.

Do not fear in raising children

I know that many of you are concerned about raising your children during these difficult times and increasing their faith. When my wife and I were starting our family in the San Francisco Bay area, we had that same concern. At a critical point our stake members were advised by Elder Harold B. Lee, then a member of the Twelve, that we could raise our families in righteousness if we would:

1. Follow the prophet.
2. Create the true spirit of the gospel in our hearts and homes.

3. Be a light to those among whom we live.

4. Focus on the ordinances and principles taught in the temple. (See D&C 115:5; Harold B. Lee, “Your Light to Be a Standard unto the Nations,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1973, 3–4.)

As we followed this counsel, our faith increased and our fears decreased. I believe we can raise righteous children anywhere in the world if they are taught religious principles in the home.

Do not fear in sharing the gospel

One area where members can live by faith and not by fear is in our missionary effort. Prior to my call to the Presidency of the Seventy on August 1 of this year, I had served in the Missionary Department for six years, the last three years as executive director under Elder M. Russell Ballard, who served as chairman of the Missionary Executive Council.

Some mission presidents informed us that many wonderful members are in camouflage to their neighbors and co-workers. They do not let people know who they are and what they believe. We need much more member involvement in sharing the message of the Restoration. Romans 10, verse 14, puts this into perspective:

“How then shall they call on him [speaking of the Savior] in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

Verse 15 contains the wonderful message referenced in Isaiah: “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings” (see also Isaiah 52:7).

It has been observed that the members are going to have to move their feet and let their voices be heard if they are to achieve this blessing.

Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service was first introduced in October 2004. President Hinckley commenced this effort when he called for missionaries to learn the doctrine and to teach the principles by the Spirit. Every member of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve participated to a significant degree. Elder Ballard and I felt that the windows of heaven were opened and the Lord’s inspiration poured out to bring forth this great resource.

Over 1.5 million copies of *Preach My Gospel* have been acquired by the members of the Church. It is a wonderful foundation, and the missionaries are powerful, spiritual teachers. However, if we are to accomplish what President Hinckley has requested, the members, living by faith and not by fear, need to share the gospel with their friends and associates.

Do not fear in Church service

In our individual callings we need to have faith and not be fearful.

Our daughter, Kathryn, is serving as the Primary president in her ward in Salt Lake City. My wife and I attended her ward last Sunday to observe the Primary sacrament meeting presentation, “I’ll Follow Him in Faith.” I was thrilled to hear the children recite scriptures and stories coupled with songs focused on faith in Christ.

After the meeting I asked her about her calling. She said that initially the calling weighed her down. Much time was spent going over problems. Then the presidency decided to emphasize love, faith, and prayer. Suddenly spiritual impressions came to mind about a particular child or family. Friction was replaced with love. She tells me that as they acted upon promptings from the Spirit, Primary reflected a reverence and peace, and real gospel learning was taking place.

Faith in Jesus Christ sustains us

It is our faith in Jesus Christ that sustains us at the crossroads of life's journey. It is the first principle of the gospel. Without it we will spin our wheels at the intersection, spending our precious time but getting nowhere. It is Christ who offers the invitation to follow Him, to give Him our burden, and to carry His yoke, "for [His] yoke is easy, and [His] burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

There is no other name under heaven whereby man can be saved (see Acts 4:12). We must take upon us His name and receive His image in our countenance so that when He comes we will be more

like Him (see 1 John 3:2; Alma 5:14). When we choose to follow Christ in faith rather than choosing another path out of fear, we are blessed with a consequence that is consistent with our choice (see D&C 6:34–36).

May we all recognize and give thanks for the incomparable gift of life we each enjoy and for the breath that He lends us daily. May we choose to have conviction at the crossroads of life and exercise faith in Jesus Christ. My prayer is that we will live by faith and not by fear. I bear my witness of God, who is our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, who atoned for our sins, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa

Parents' responsibility to teach the gospel

On September 23, 1995, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles introduced to the Church and the world a document called "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." I quote from the paragraph which reads, "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children."¹

We live in a day and age in which this counsel is indeed very important. Many parents argue that they don't have time for their families. The fast-paced lifestyle of modern-day life and excessive amounts of work are curbing parents' attention from what is most important: to give time, to give of oneself to one's family.

The Lord taught us that every man has the responsibility to provide for his family,² but that does not mean solely to store up the house with food and other items which are needed or desired. We must also have time to provide our family with teachings. What should we teach?

Our Father has taught us that parents are obligated to teach the gospel to their children.³ The prophet Lehi understood well his responsibility to teach his children. Nephi declared that he had been taught "in all the learning of [his] father."⁴

The Lord instructed us how to take care of our families when He told us through His prophets in the proclamation to the world, "Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live."⁵

Now is the time to protect our families

We know that God has taught us for centuries how to protect and take care of our families. We also know and can see that the adversary has been attacking the family. Now is the time to use all those teachings. Now is the time to perform our God-given duties concerning the family.

President James E. Faust gave us three key things we can do to protect and strengthen our families:

1. Family prayer. Parents must teach their children that they are God's children and therefore need to pray to Him daily.

2. Family home evening. As President Faust taught us, family home evening is for all of us no matter what stage of life we are in. We must have Monday nights free of all other activities that might keep us from gathering as a family.

3. Personal and family scripture study. We need to help our children strengthen their faith and testimonies through this basic habit.⁶

As we follow President Faust's wise counsel, we will be protecting family members against Satan's attacks as well as strengthening their faith and testimony in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Love is needed to teach and guide a family

In the family proclamation we also learn that "by divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners."⁷

It is in the home that the family learns and applies gospel principles. Great love is necessary in order to teach and guide a family. Loving fathers and mothers will teach their children to worship God in their home. When a worshipping spirit permeates the home, that spirit is extended into the life of each family member. This will prepare them to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to be able to return to God's presence and stay together as a family for all eternity.

The family proclamation helps us understand much of the love the Savior referred to when He told us to "love one

another."⁸ He gave us the supreme example of love when He declared, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."⁹ He later atoned for all our sins and finally gave His life for all of us.

We can lay down our lives for those we love not by physically dying for them but rather by living for them—giving of our time, always being present in their lives, serving them, being courteous and affectionate, and showing true love for those of our family and to all men—as the Savior taught.

Do not procrastinate showing your love

We don't know what could happen to us tomorrow, and that is why today is the time to start showing your love through small acts such as a hug and an "I love you" to your spouse and children and those around you.

I recently read a text which expresses the urgency of not leaving for tomorrow what you can do today. In July of this year, Brazil witnessed the most devastating aircraft accident in its history. There were 199 people killed, including passengers, airline workers, crew members, and others who were at the site when the accident happened. The text I mentioned was said to have been posted on the airline communication board by the husband of one of the flight attendants who died in the accident. It is entitled "Tomorrow Never Comes" and is based upon a poem by Norma Cornett Marek.

If I knew this would be the last time I
would watch you sleep,

I would hug you tighter. I would plead
with the Lord to protect you.

If I knew this would be the last time I
saw you walk out the door,

I would hug and kiss you and call you
back to hug and kiss you one more
time.

If I knew this would be the last time I
would hear your voice in prayer,

I would record every gesture, every
 look, every smile, every one of your
 words,
 So that I could listen to it later, day
 after day.
 If I knew this would be the last time,
 I would spend an extra minute or two
 to tell you, "I love you," instead of
 assuming you already knew it.
 If I knew this would be our last time,
 our last moment,
 I would be by your side, spending the
 day with you instead of thinking,
 "Well, I'm sure other opportunities will
 come, so I can let this day go by."
 Of course there will be a day to revise
 things,
 And we would have a second chance to
 do things right.
 Oh, of course there will be another day
 for us to say, "I love you."
 And certainly there will be another
 chance to tell each other, "Can I
 help with anything?"
 But in my case, there isn't one!
 I don't have you here with me, and
 today is the last day we have—our
 farewell.
 Therefore I would like to say how much
 I love you,
 And I hope you never forget it.
 Tomorrow is not promised to anyone,
 young or old.
 Today might be your last chance to hold
 tight to the hand of the one you love
 and show all you feel.
 If you are waiting for tomorrow, why
 not do it today?
 Because if tomorrow never comes, you
 certainly will regret for the rest of
 your life
 Not having spent some extra time for a
 smile, a conversation, a hug, a kiss,

Because you were too busy to give that
 person what ended up being their
 last wish.

Then hug tight today the one you
 love, your friends, your family, and
 whisper in their ears how much you
 love them and want them close to
 you.

Use your time to say,

"I'm sorry,"

"Please,"

"Forgive me,"

"Thank you,"

Or even,

"That was nothing,"

"It's all right,"

Because if tomorrow never comes, you
 will not have to regret today.

The past doesn't come back, and the
 future might not come!¹⁰

Let us express our love to our spouse
 and children and our brothers and sisters
 today.

I know God lives. I know Jesus is the
 Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I know
 that Joseph Smith is a prophet of the
 Lord and that Gordon B. Hinckley is
 God's living prophet on this earth. In the
 name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 75:28.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
4. 1 Nephi 1:1.
5. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
6. See "Challenges Facing the Family,"
Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting,
 Jan. 10, 2004, 2–3.
7. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. John 13:34.
9. John 15:13.
10. See www.heartwhispers.net; printed
 with permission.

Julie B. Beck

Mothers who know

In the Book of Mormon we read about 2,000 exemplary young men who were exceedingly valiant, courageous, and strong. “Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:21). These faithful young men paid tribute to their mothers. They said, “Our mothers knew it” (Alma 56:48). I would suspect that the mothers of Captain Moroni, Mosiah, Mormon, and other great leaders also knew.

The responsibility mothers have today has never required more vigilance. More than at any time in the history of the world, we need mothers who know. Children are being born into a world where they “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).¹ However, mothers need not fear. When mothers know who they are and who God is and have made covenants with Him, they will have great power and influence for good on their children.

Mothers who know bear children

Mothers who know desire to bear children. Whereas in many cultures in the world children are “becoming less valued,”² in the culture of the gospel we still believe in having children. Prophets, seers, and revelators who were sustained at this conference have declared that “God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.”³ President Ezra Taft Benson taught that young couples should not postpone having children and that “in the eternal perspective, children—not posses-

sions, not position, not prestige—are our greatest jewels.”⁴

Faithful daughters of God desire children. In the scriptures we read of Eve (see Moses 4:26), Sarah (see Genesis 17:16), Rebekah (see Genesis 24:60), and Mary (see 1 Nephi 11:13–20), who were foreordained to be mothers before children were born to them. Some women are not given the responsibility of bearing children in mortality, but just as Hannah of the Old Testament prayed fervently for her child (see 1 Samuel 1:11), the value women place on motherhood in this life and the attributes of motherhood they attain here will rise with them in the Resurrection (see D&C 130:18). Women who desire and work toward that blessing in this life are promised they will receive it for all eternity, and eternity is much, much longer than mortality. There is eternal influence and power in motherhood.

Mothers who know honor sacred ordinances and covenants

Mothers who know honor sacred ordinances and covenants. I have visited sacrament meetings in some of the poorest places on the earth where mothers have dressed with great care in their Sunday best despite walking for miles on dusty streets and using worn-out public transportation. They bring daughters in clean and ironed dresses with hair brushed to perfection; their sons wear white shirts and ties and have missionary haircuts. These mothers know they are going to sacrament meeting, where covenants are renewed. These mothers have made and honor temple covenants. They know that if they are not pointing their children to the temple, they are not pointing them toward desired eternal goals. These mothers have influence and power.

Mothers who know are nurturers

Mothers who know are nurturers. This is their special assignment and role under the plan of happiness.⁵ To nurture means to cultivate, care for, and make grow. Therefore, mothers who know create a climate for spiritual and temporal growth in their homes. Another word for *nurturing* is *homemaking*. Homemaking includes cooking, washing clothes and dishes, and keeping an orderly home. Home is where women have the most power and influence; therefore, Latter-day Saint women should be the best homemakers in the world. Working beside children in homemaking tasks creates opportunities to teach and model qualities children should emulate. Nurturing mothers are knowledgeable, but all the education women attain will avail them nothing if they do not have the skill to make a home that creates a climate for spiritual growth. Growth occurs best in a “house of order,” and women should pattern their homes after the Lord’s house (see D&C 109). Nurturing requires organization, patience, love, and work. Helping growth occur through nurturing is truly a powerful and influential role bestowed on women.

Mothers who know are leaders

Mothers who know are leaders. In equal partnership with their husbands, they lead a great and eternal organization. These mothers plan for the future of their organization. They plan for missions, temple marriages, and education. They plan for prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Mothers who know build children into future leaders and are the primary examples of what leaders look like. They do not abandon their plan by succumbing to social pressure and worldly models of parenting. These wise

mothers who know are selective about their own activities and involvement to conserve their limited strength in order to maximize their influence where it matters most.

Mothers who know are teachers

Mothers who know are always teachers. Since they are not baby-sitters, they are never off duty. A well-taught friend told me that he did not learn anything at church that he had not already learned at home. His parents used family scripture study, prayer, family home evening, mealtimes, and other gatherings to teach. Think of the power of our future missionary force if mothers considered their homes as a pre-missionary training center. Then the doctrines of the gospel taught in the MTC would be a review and not a revelation. That is influence; that is power.

Mothers who know do less

Mothers who know do less. They permit less of what will not bear good fruit eternally. They allow less media in their homes, less distraction, less activity that draws their children away from their home. Mothers who know are willing to live on less and consume less of the world’s goods in order to spend more time with their children—more time eating together, more time working together, more time reading together, more time talking, laughing, singing, and exemplifying. These mothers choose carefully and do not try to choose it all. Their goal is to prepare a rising generation of children who will take the gospel of Jesus Christ into the entire world. Their goal is to prepare future fathers and mothers who will be builders of the Lord’s kingdom for the next 50 years. That is influence; that is power.

Mothers who know stand strong and immovable

Who will prepare this righteous generation of sons and daughters? Latter-day Saint women will do this—women who know and love the Lord and bear testimony of Him, women who are strong and immovable and who do not give up during difficult and discouraging times. We are led by an inspired prophet of God who has called upon the women of the Church to “stand strong and immovable for that which is correct and proper under the plan of the Lord.”⁶ He has asked us to “begin in [our] own homes”⁷ to teach children the ways of truth. Latter-day Saint women should be the very best in the world at upholding, nurturing, and protecting families. I have every confidence that our women will do this and will come to be known as mothers who “knew” (Alma 56:48). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 21.
2. James E. Faust, “Challenges Facing the Family,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 2.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
4. *To the Mothers in Zion* (pamphlet, 1987), 3.
5. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20.
7. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20.

The choir and congregation sang
“I Am a Child of God.”

Elder Christoffel Golden Jr.

Small and simple things

Everyone who will live the gospel of Jesus Christ daily and endure to the end will gain eternal life—this is the promise of the Lord.¹ In its essentials, the gospel is simple and easy to understand and adapted to the capacity of the weakest.² Alma, the Book of Mormon prophet, aptly remarked, “Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but . . . by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; . . . and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls.”³

A man’s journey back to fellowship

Quite recently I was privileged to observe this process in the life of a brother

named Stan, who had been less active for some 45 years. He had lived a good life and supported both his wife and son in their activity as faithful members in the Church. Yet for personal reasons he chose to remain outside the fellowship of the Church. Even so, each month he welcomed the home teachers.

Power of the Book of Mormon

During February 2006, Stan received new home teachers. Their first visit was pleasant enough, although Stan showed no real interest in the gospel or in any matters remotely associated with spiritual things. Their next visit did little to alter their initial observations, even though Stan was a little warmer and friendlier. On their third visit, however, there was a visible change in Stan’s countenance

and demeanor. To their utmost surprise and even before they were able to present their message, Stan interrupted them with a number of thoughtful questions. In the ensuing discussion he also recounted his experiences during the past month, in which he and his wife had commenced reading one chapter a day from the Book of Mormon.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie eloquently described the type of reawakening Stan experienced: “Here is a man who gains a copy of this blessed book, begins to read it, and continues . . . until, having read it all, his famished soul is filled with the bread of life. He cannot lay it aside or ignore its teachings. It is as though the waters of life are flowing into the barren deserts of his soul, quenching the arid, empty feeling that theretofore separated him from his God.”⁴

The home teachers were reminded of the remarkable power of the Book of Mormon and how very real the influence of the Spirit of the Lord is when we turn to its sacred pages. They also more fully understood the Prophet Joseph Smith’s declaration “that the Book of Mormon [is] the most correct of any book on earth, . . . and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”⁵

Soul-searching, fervent prayer

Stan’s thirst for learning and rediscovery of the restored gospel soon expanded his reading beyond one chapter a day, accompanied by deep soul-searching and fervent prayer. To those who sometimes are concerned whether the Lord will actually hear their prayers, the Savior reminds us:

“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? . . .

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father

give good gifts, through the Holy Spirit, to them that ask him?”⁶

Our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, also counseled:

“You can’t do it alone. . . . You need the help of the Lord . . . and the marvelous thing is that you have the opportunity to pray, with the expectation that your prayers will be heard and answered. . . . He stands ready to help.”⁷

Partaking of the sacrament

During August of 2006, Stan ventured alongside his ever-faithful wife into his ward sacrament meeting—his first in 45 years. There, with a humble and prayerful heart, he listened to the simple sacramental prayers offered by the youthful priests. Feeling unworthy and sensing something of the depth and the meaning of this most holy ordinance, he reflected deeply and painfully without partaking of the bread or the water for a number of weeks.

President Joseph Fielding Smith, in a tender testimony many years ago, said: “In my judgment the sacrament meeting is the most sacred, the most holy, of all the meetings of the Church. When I reflect upon the gathering of the Savior and his apostles on that memorable night when he introduced the sacrament . . . my heart is filled with wonderment and my feelings are touched. I consider that gathering one of the most solemn and wonderful since the beginning of time.”⁸

Stan continued studying, praying, attending church, and receiving appropriate counsel and encouragement from his home teachers. Then the day arrived when, joyfully, he felt he was ready to put forth his hand to partake of the precious sacrament. When we partake worthily, thoughtfully, and reverently of the holy sacrament, we are enabled to become “partakers of the divine nature”⁹ because of the Atonement of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost.

As Stan returned to activity in the Church, he received a calling and, some months later, was ordained an elder. In July 2007, Stan and his wife knelt across the altar in a house of the Lord and, by the authority and eternal law of God, were married for time and for all eternity.¹⁰

The power of small and simple things

Brothers and sisters, may we discover anew the divine power of daily prayer and the convincing influence of the Book of Mormon and the holy scriptures. On Sundays, when partaking of the sacrament, may we do so in the spirit of true devotion to Him who is the giver of all things.¹¹

In the wake of our best and very limited efforts and because of the Lord's infinite goodness, "great things [are] brought to pass" by the "small and simple things."

Finally, as to these sacred things, may I add my personal witness and assurance in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 3 Nephi 27:13–18; Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
2. See Matthew 11:28–30; Jacob 4:14; Alma 37:44; Doctrine and Covenants 133:57–58.
3. Alma 37:6–7.
4. *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 414.
5. *History of the Church*, 4:461.
6. Luke 11:11, 13; see Joseph Smith Translation in footnote 13a.
7. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 468.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1929, 60–61.
9. 2 Peter 1:4; see also 3 Nephi 18:1–14.
10. See Matthew 19:3–6; Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.
11. See Moroni 6.

Elder David A. Bednar

Clean hands and a pure heart

I have fond childhood memories of my mother reading Book of Mormon stories to me. She had a way of making the scriptural episodes come alive in my youthful imagination, and I did not doubt that my mother had a witness of the truthfulness of that sacred record. I especially remember her description of the Savior's visit to the American continent following His resurrection and of His teachings to the people in the land of Bountiful. Through the simple consistency of her example and testimony, my mother kindled in me the first flames of faith in the Savior and in His latter-day Church. I came to know for myself that the Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ and

contains the fulness of His everlasting gospel (see D&C 27:5).

Today I want to review with you one of my favorite Book of Mormon events, the Savior's appearance in the New World, and discuss His instruction to the multitude about the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost. I pray for the guidance of the Spirit for me and for you.

The Savior's ministry in the New World

During the Lord's three-day ministry in the New World, He taught His doctrine, authorized His disciples to perform priesthood ordinances, healed the sick, prayed for the people, and lovingly blessed the children. As the Savior's time with the people was drawing to a close,

He succinctly summarized the fundamental principles of His gospel.

Said He, "Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20).

The basic principles outlined by the Master in this scripture are essential for us to understand and apply in our lives. First was repentance, "a turning of the heart and will to God, and a renunciation of sin" (Bible Dictionary, "Repentance," 760). As we appropriately seek for and receive the spiritual gift of faith in the Redeemer, we then turn to and rely upon the merits, the mercy, and the grace of the Holy Messiah (see 2 Nephi 2:8). Repentance is the sweet fruit that comes from faith in the Savior and involves turning toward God and away from sin.

The risen Lord next explained the importance of coming unto Him. The multitude gathered together at the temple was invited literally to come forth unto the Savior "one by one" to feel the prints of the nails in the Master's hands and feet and to thrust their hands into His side (3 Nephi 11:15). Each individual who had this experience "did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he" (v. 15), even Jesus Christ, who had come.

The Savior also taught the people to come unto Him through sacred covenants, and He reminded them that they were "the children of the covenant" (3 Nephi 20:26). He emphasized the eternal importance of the ordinances of baptism (see 3 Nephi 11:19–39) and of receiving the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 11:35–36; 12:6; 18:36–38). In a similar manner, you and I are admonished to turn toward and learn from Christ and to come unto Him through the covenants and ordinances of His restored gospel. As we do so, we will eventually and ultimately come to know Him (see John 17:3), "in his own time,

and in his own way, and according to his own will" (D&C 88:68), as did the people in the land of Bountiful.

Repenting and coming unto Christ through the covenants and ordinances of salvation are prerequisite to and a preparation for being sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost and standing spotless before God at the last day. I now want to focus our attention on the sanctifying influence the Holy Ghost can be in our lives.

Our spiritual journey

The gate of baptism leads to the strait and narrow path and to the destination of putting off the natural man and becoming a saint through the Atonement of Christ the Lord (see Mosiah 3:19). The purpose of our mortal journey is not merely to see the sights on earth or to expend our allotment of time on self-centered pursuits; rather, we are to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4), to become sanctified by yielding our hearts unto God (see Helaman 3:35), and to obtain "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16).

We are commanded and instructed to so live that our fallen nature is changed through the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost. President Marion G. Romney taught that the baptism of fire by the Holy Ghost "converts [us] from carnality to spirituality. It cleanses, heals, and purifies the soul. . . . Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and water baptism are all preliminary and prerequisite to it, but [the baptism of fire] is the consummation. To receive [this baptism of fire] is to have one's garments washed in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ" (*Learning for the Eternities*, comp. George J. Romney [1977], 133; see also 3 Nephi 27:19–20).

Hence, as we are born again and strive to always have His Spirit to be with us, the Holy Ghost sanctifies and refines our souls as if by fire (see 2 Nephi 31:13–14, 17). Ultimately, we are to stand spotless before God.

The gospel of Jesus Christ encompasses much more than avoiding, overcoming, and being cleansed from sin and the bad influences in our lives; it also essentially entails doing good, being good, and becoming better. Repenting of our sins and seeking forgiveness are spiritually necessary, and we must always do so. But remission of sin is not the only or even the ultimate purpose of the gospel. To have our hearts changed by the Holy Spirit such that “we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2), as did King Benjamin’s people, is the covenant responsibility we have accepted. This mighty change is not simply the result of working harder or developing greater individual discipline. Rather, it is the consequence of a fundamental change in our desires, our motives, and our natures made possible through the Atonement of Christ the Lord. Our spiritual purpose is to overcome both sin and the desire to sin—both the taint and the tyranny of sin.

Prophets throughout the ages have emphasized the dual requirements of (1) avoiding and overcoming bad and (2) doing good and becoming better. Consider the penetrating questions posed by the Psalmist:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully” (Psalm 24:3–4).

Brothers and sisters, it is possible for us to have clean hands but not have a pure heart. Please notice that both clean hands and a pure heart are required to ascend into the hill of the Lord and to stand in His holy place.

Let me suggest that hands are made clean through the process of putting off the natural man and by overcoming sin and the evil influences in our lives through

the Savior’s Atonement. Hearts are purified as we receive His strengthening power to do good and become better. All of our worthy desires and good works, as necessary as they are, can never produce clean hands and a pure heart. It is the Atonement of Jesus Christ that provides both a *cleansing and redeeming power* that helps us to overcome sin and a *sanctifying and strengthening power* that helps us to become better than we ever could by relying only on our own strength. The infinite Atonement is for both the sinner and for the saint in each of us.

In the Book of Mormon, we find the masterful teachings of King Benjamin concerning the mission and Atonement of Jesus Christ. The simple doctrine he taught caused the congregation to fall to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.

“And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive *forgiveness of our sins*, and our *hearts may be purified*; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 4:2; italics added).

Again in this verse we find the two-fold blessing of both forgiveness of sin, suggesting clean hands, and the transformation of our nature, signifying pure hearts.

As King Benjamin concluded his instruction, he reiterated the importance of these two basic aspects of spiritual development.

“And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of *retaining a remission of your sins from day to day*, that ye may walk *guiltless before God*—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor” (Mosiah 4:26; italics added).

Our sincere desire should be to have both clean hands *and* a pure heart—both a remission of sins from day to day *and* to walk guiltless before God. Clean hands alone will not be enough when we stand before Him who is pure and who, as “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19), freely spilled His precious blood for us.

Line upon line

Some who hear or read this message may think the spiritual progress I am describing is not attainable in their lives. We may believe these truths apply to others but not to us.

We will not attain a state of perfection in this life, but we can and should press forward with faith in Christ along the strait and narrow path and make steady progress toward our eternal destiny. The Lord’s pattern for spiritual development is “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” (2 Nephi 28:30). Small, steady, incremental spiritual improvements are the steps the Lord would have us take. Preparing to walk guiltless before God is one of the primary purposes of mortality and the pursuit of a lifetime; it does not result from sporadic spurts of intense spiritual activity.

I witness that the Savior will strengthen and assist us to make sustained, paced progress. The example in the Book of Mormon of “many, exceedingly great many” (Alma 13:12) in the ancient Church who were pure and spotless before God is a source of encouragement and comfort to me. I suspect those members of the ancient Church were ordinary men and women just like you and me. These individuals could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence, and they “were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God” (v. 12). And these principles and this process of spiritual progress apply to each of us equally and always.

Moroni’s concluding invitation

The requirement to put off the natural man and become a saint, to avoid and overcome bad and to do and become good, to have clean hands and a pure heart, is a recurring theme throughout the Book of Mormon. In fact, Moroni’s concluding invitation at the end of the book is a summary of this theme.

“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ. . . .

“And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the *remission of your sins*, that *ye become holy, without spot*” (Moroni 10:32–33; italics added).

May you and I repent with sincerity of heart and truly come unto Christ. I pray that we will seek through the Savior’s Atonement to have both clean hands and a pure heart, that we may become holy, without spot. I witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Eternal Father and our Savior. He who is without spot redeems us from sin and strengthens us to do good and to become better. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “God So Loved the World.”

President Hinckley

The choir has just sung “God So Loved the World.” We express our thanks to the choir for the beautiful music they have provided.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “How Firm a Foundation.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Wolfgang

H. Paul of the Seventy, and the concluding session of the conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now, my brothers and sisters, we live with an interesting phenomenon. A soloist sings the same song again and again. An orchestra repeats the same music. But a speaker is expected to come up with something new every time he speaks. I am going to break that tradition this morning and repeat in a measure what I have said on another occasion.

Marvelous growth of the Church

The Church has become one large family scattered across the earth. There are now more than 13 million of us in 176 nations and territories. A marvelous and wonderful thing is coming to pass. The Lord is fulfilling His promise that His gospel shall be as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands which would roll forth and fill the whole earth, as Daniel saw in vision (see Daniel 2:31–45; D&C 65:2). A great miracle is taking place right before our eyes.

I take you back 184 years to the year 1823. The month was September—the night of September 21–22, to be exact.

The boy Joseph Smith had prayed that night before going to sleep. He asked the Lord for forgiveness of his light-mindedness. A miraculous thing then happened. He says:

“While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noon-day, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside. . . .

“He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from

the presence of God . . . and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people” (Joseph Smith—History 1:30, 33).

The boy must have been stunned by what he heard. In the eyes of those who knew him, he was simply a poor, unlearned farm boy. He had no wealth. His neighbors were in the same condition. His parents were struggling farmers. The area where they lived was rural and largely unknown. They were simply ordinary people trying to survive through hard work.

And yet an angel of God said that Joseph’s “name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues.” How could it be? That description fits the entire world.

Now, as we look back 177 years to the organization of the Church, we marvel at what has already happened. When the Church was organized in 1830 there were but six members, only a handful of believers, all residing in a largely unknown village. Today we have become the fourth or fifth largest church in North America, with congregations in every city of any consequence. Stakes of Zion today flourish in every state of the United States, in every province of Canada, in every state of Mexico, in every nation of Central America, and throughout South America.

Congregations are found throughout the British Isles and Europe, where thousands have joined the Church through

the years. This work has reached out to the Baltic nations and on down through Bulgaria and Albania and other areas of that part of the world. It reaches across the vast area of Russia. It reaches up into Mongolia and all down through the nations of Asia into the islands of the Pacific, Australia, and New Zealand, and into India and Indonesia. It is flourishing in many of the nations of Africa.

Our general conferences are carried by satellite and other means in 92 different languages.

And this is only the beginning. This work will continue to grow and prosper and move across the earth. It must do so if Moroni's promise to Joseph is to be fulfilled.

This work is unique and wonderful. It is fundamentally different from every other body of religious doctrine of which I know.

The glorious First Vision

When Jesus walked the earth, He said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Joseph, when he was 14 years of age, had an experience in that glorious First Vision that was different from any other recorded experience of any man. At no other time of which we have any record have God, our Eternal Father, and His Beloved Son, the risen Lord, appeared on earth together.

At the time of the baptism of Jesus by John in the river Jordan, the voice of God was heard, but He was not seen. At the Mount of Transfiguration, again the voice of God was heard, but there is no record of His appearance. Stephen saw the Lord on the right hand of the Father, but They did not address or instruct him.

Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the Nephites in the Western Hemisphere. The voice of the Almighty was heard three times, introducing the

risen Christ, but there was no appearance of the Father.

How truly remarkable was that vision in the year 1820 when Joseph prayed in the woods and there appeared before him both the Father and the Son. One of these spoke to him, calling him by name and, pointing to the other, said, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

Nothing like it had ever happened before. One is led to wonder why it was so important that both the Father and the Son appear. I think it was because They were ushering in the dispensation of the fulness of times, the last and final dispensation of the gospel, when there would be gathered together in one the elements of all previous dispensations. This was to be the final chapter in the long chronicle of God's dealing with men and women upon the earth.

The nature of Deity

Following the Savior's death, the Church He had established drifted into apostasy. Fulfilled were the words of Isaiah, who said, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5).

Realizing the importance of knowing the true nature of God, men had struggled to find a way to define Him. Learned clerics argued with one another. When Constantine became a Christian in the fourth century, he called together a great convocation of learned men with the hope that they could reach a conclusion of understanding concerning the true nature of Deity. All they reached was a compromise of various points of view. The result was the Nicene Creed of A.D. 325. This and subsequent creeds have become the declaration of doctrine concerning the nature of Deity for most of Christianity ever since.

I have read them all a number of times. I cannot understand them. I think others cannot understand them. I am sure that the Lord also knew that many would not understand them. And so in 1820, in that incomparable vision, the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph. They spoke to him with words that were audible, and he spoke to Them. They could see. They could speak. They could hear. They were personal. They were of substance. They were not imaginary beings. They were beings tabernacled in flesh. And out of that experience has come our unique and true understanding of the nature of Deity.

No wonder that when Joseph in 1842 wrote the Articles of Faith, he stated as number one, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Articles of Faith 1:1).

Great influence of the Book of Mormon

As all of you well know, there followed through the years a veritable "cloud of witnesses," as Paul described prophetically (see Hebrews 12:1).

First came Moroni with the plates from which was translated the Book of Mormon. What a singular and remarkable thing this was. Joseph's story of the gold plates was fantastic. It was hard to believe and easy to challenge. Could he have written it of his own capacity? It is here, my brothers and sisters, for everyone to see, to handle, to read. Every attempt to explain its origin, other than that which he gave, has fallen of its own weight. He was largely unschooled, and yet in a very brief time he brought forth the translation which in published form comes to more than 500 pages.

Paul declares that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1).

The Bible had stood for centuries. It is a precious and wonderful book. Now

there was a second witness declaring the divinity of Christ. The Book of Mormon is the only book ever published, of which I know, that carries in it a promise that one who reads it prayerfully and asks concerning it in prayer will have revealed to him by the power of the Holy Ghost a knowledge that it is true (see Moroni 10:4).

Since its first publication in a rural print shop in Palmyra, New York, there have been more than 133 million copies produced. It has been translated into 105 languages. Not long ago it was named one of the 20 most influential books ever published in North America. Recently a first edition sold for \$105,000. But the cheapest paperback edition is as valuable to the reader who loves its language and message.

Through all of these years, critics have tried to explain it. They have spoken against it. They have ridiculed it. But it has outlived them all, and its influence today is greater than at any time in its history.

Priesthood and Church restored

In this series of events came next the restoration of the priesthood, bestowed by resurrected beings who held it when the Savior walked the earth. This occurred in 1829, when Joseph was only 23.

Following receipt of the priesthood, the Church was organized on the 6th of April, 1830, when Joseph was a young man not yet 25. Again, the organization is unique and different from that of traditional Christianity. It is largely operated by a lay ministry. Voluntary service is its genius. As it has grown and spread abroad, thousands upon thousands of faithful and able men have directed its efforts.

Witness of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Today I stand in wonder at the marvelous things which God revealed to His

appointed prophet while he was yet young and largely unknown. The very language of these revelations is beyond the capacity of even a man of great learning.

Scholars not of our faith, who will not accept our singular doctrines, are puzzled by the great unrolling of this work, which is touching the hearts of people across the earth. We owe it all to Joseph the Prophet, the seer and the revelator, the Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was foreordained to come forth in this generation as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty in restoring to the earth that which the Savior taught when He walked the roads of Palestine.

To you this day, I affirm my witness of the calling of the Prophet Joseph, of his works, of the sealing of his testimony with his blood as a martyr to the eternal truth. Each of you can bear witness of the same thing. You and I are faced with the stark question of accepting the truth of the First

Vision and that which followed it. On the question of its reality lies the very validity of this Church. If it is the truth—and I testify that it is—then the work in which we are engaged is the most important work on the earth.

I leave with you my testimony of the truth of these things, and I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you. May the windows of heaven be opened and blessings showered upon you as the Lord has promised. Never forget that this was His promise and that He has the power and the capacity to see that it is fulfilled. I so pray as I leave my blessing and love with you in the sacred name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “How Firm a Foundation.”

Elder Wolfgang H. Paul offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 7, 2007. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. Andrew Unsworth and Richard Elliott were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 177th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinck-

ley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, and satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Andrew Unsworth and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Beautiful Zion, Built Above.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Robert S. Wood of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing “Our Prayer to Thee,” with soloist Scott Miller. Elders Robert D. Hales

and Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Brother Daniel K. Judd, first counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, and Elder Octaviano Tenorio of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Beautiful Zion, Built Above.”

Elder Robert S. Wood offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Our Prayer to Thee.”

Elder Robert D. Hales

The need for personal revelation

As we begin the concluding session of this historic conference, I join you in expressing gratitude for the privilege of sustaining President Henry B. Eyring as a counselor in the First Presidency, Elder Quentin L. Cook in the Quorum of the Twelve, and Elder Walter F. González in the seven Presidents of the Seventy. I offer them my love and support and testify that they are called of God by a living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, “according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy.”¹

The events of the past two days teach us the need for revelation in the Lord’s work and personal revelation in our own lives. Personal revelation is the way we know for ourselves the most important truths of our existence: the living reality of God, our Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ; the truthfulness of the restored gospel; and God’s purpose and direction for us.

Much of what I know about personal revelation I have learned from the examples of the prophets, both ancient and modern. This afternoon I would like to share a few of these personal examples and pray that they will inspire each of us to seek the blessings of personal revelation in our own lives.

As a young regional representative, I was assigned to assist Elder Marion G. Romney in reorganizing a stake. During the long, quiet ride to the conference, our

conversation turned to the spiritual dimensions of our assignment. Elder Romney taught me about how the Lord blesses us with revelation. “Robert,” he said, “I have learned that when we are on the Lord’s errand, we have His blessings to accomplish whatever we are asked to do.” Elder Romney further explained that we would arrive in the distant city, kneel in prayer, interview priesthood holders, kneel in prayer again, and the Holy Ghost would reveal to us the person whom the Lord had chosen to be the new stake president. He promised me it would be one of the great spiritual experiences of my life, and it was.

Each of us has been sent to earth by our Heavenly Father to merit eternal life: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”² How do we know the Father and the Son for ourselves? By personal revelation. Personal revelation is the way Heavenly Father helps us know Him and His Son, learn and live the gospel, endure to the end in righteousness, and qualify for eternal life—to return back into Their presence.

How to seek revelation

You may ask, “How do we seek personal revelation?” Paul counseled the Saints to rely on the Spirit rather than the wisdom of the world.³ To obtain that Spirit, we begin with prayer. President Lorenzo Snow had studied the gospel for

several years before joining the Church. But he did not receive a witness until two or three weeks after his baptism when he retired in secret prayer. “The Spirit of God descended upon me,” he said. “O, the joy and happiness I felt . . . [for] I then received a perfect knowledge that God lives, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and of the restoration of the holy Priesthood, and the fulness of the Gospel.”⁴

I have learned that prayer provides a firm foundation for personal revelation. But more is required. While still a regional representative, I had the opportunity to learn from another Apostle, Elder Boyd K. Packer. We were assigned to reorganize a stake and began by kneeling in prayer together. After interviewing priesthood leaders and having prayer, Elder Packer suggested that we walk around the building together. As we walked, he demonstrated a vital principle of seeking personal revelation—the principle the Lord taught Oliver Cowdery: “Behold, . . . you must study it out in your mind.”⁵ We pondered our assignment, counseled together, and listened to the voice of the Spirit. When we went back, we prayed and studied further, and then we were prepared to receive revelation.

On the Lord’s timetable

Revelation comes on the Lord’s timetable, which often means we must move forward in faith, even though we haven’t received all the answers we desire. As a General Authority, I was assigned to help reorganize a stake presidency under the direction of Elder Ezra Taft Benson. After praying, interviewing, studying, and praying again, Elder Benson asked if I knew who the new president would be. I said I had not received that inspiration yet. He looked at me for a long time and replied he hadn’t either. However, we were inspired to ask three worthy priesthood holders to speak in the Saturday evening session of conference. Moments

after the third speaker began, the Spirit prompted me that he should be the new stake president. I looked over at President Benson and saw tears streaming down his face. Revelation had been given to both of us—but only by continuing to seek our Heavenly Father’s will as we moved forward in faith.

More frequently than we know

Early in my Church service, Elder Harold B. Lee taught this lesson when he came to organize a new stake in the district where we were living. Elder Lee asked me, as a newly sustained bishop, if I would join him at a press conference. There an intense young reporter challenged Elder Lee. He said to him, “You call yourself a prophet. When was the last time you had revelation, and what was it about?” Elder Lee paused, looked directly at him, and responded in a sweet way, “It was yesterday afternoon about three o’clock. We were praying about who should be called as the president of the new stake, and it was made known to us who that individual should be.” The reporter’s heart changed. I will never forget the Spirit that came into that room as Elder Lee bore his powerful witness of revelation that can be received by those faithfully seeking to do the Lord’s will.

As faithful children, youth, parents, teachers, and leaders, we may receive personal revelation more frequently than we realize. The more we receive and acknowledge personal revelation, the more our testimonies grow. When I served as a bishop, my testimony grew each time I received revelation to extend callings to ward members. That testimony has been strengthened each time I have witnessed General Authorities and officers, Area Seventies, and stake presidents called or given new assignments. More importantly, I am strengthened by the personal revelations I receive in my role as a son of God, a husband, and a father. I am so

thankful for the guidance and direction of the Spirit in our home as we seek for direction in family matters.

Pattern of revelation shown by prophets

For all of us, our personal revelations reflect the pattern of revelation received by prophets, as recounted in the scriptures. Adam and Eve called upon the name of the Lord and received personal revelation, including knowledge of the Savior.⁶ Enoch, Abraham, and Moses sought for the welfare of their people and were given marvelous revelations recorded in the Pearl of Great Price.⁷ Elijah's personal revelation came through the still, small voice;⁸ Daniel's came in a dream.⁹ Peter's personal revelation gave him a testimony that Jesus is the Christ.¹⁰ Lehi and Nephi received revelations about the Savior and the plan of salvation, and virtually all of the Bible and Book of Mormon prophets received revelations to warn, teach, strengthen, and comfort them and their people.¹¹ After much prayer in the temple, President Spencer W. Kimball received the revelation on the priesthood.¹² And after praying about providing temple blessings to more members of the Church, President Hinckley received revelation about the building of smaller temples.¹³

Prophets receive personal revelations to help them in their own lives and in directing the earthly affairs of the Church. Our responsibility is to seek personal revelations for ourselves and for the responsibilities the Lord has given us.

These past weeks President Hinckley has been seeking revelation about the callings that would be announced in this conference. About a month ago in our Thursday temple meeting of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, I listened as President Hinckley offered a simple, sincere prayer for spiritual guidance. The answer to his heartfelt prayer has now been presented to all of us.

Do we see the pattern of revelation in the lives of prophets? Are the threads of that pattern also woven through our lives?

We know that the pattern centers on the Atonement.¹⁴ We receive the blessings of the Atonement when we repent of our sins and keep the commandments. This we covenanted to do when we were baptized, and we renew that covenant each week as we partake of the sacrament. As we continue in righteousness, we qualify ourselves to say with Samuel, "Speak, [Lord]; for thy servant heareth."¹⁵ And the Lord answers, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."¹⁶

Faith is the key to revelation

We prepare to receive personal revelation as the prophets do, by studying the scriptures, fasting, praying, and building faith. Faith is the key. Remember Joseph's preparation for the First Vision:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. . . .

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."¹⁷

By unwavering faith, we learn for ourselves that "it is by faith that miracles are wrought."¹⁸

Generally, those miracles will not be physical demonstrations of God's power—parting of the Red Sea, raising of the dead, breaking down prison walls, or the appearance of heavenly messengers. By design, most miracles are spiritual demonstrations of God's power—tender mercies gently bestowed through impressions, ideas, feelings of assurance, solutions to problems, strength to meet challenges, and comfort to bear disappointments and sorrow.

These miracles come to us as we endure what the scriptures call a "trial of [our] faith."¹⁹ Sometimes that trial is the time it takes before an answer is received. When President David O. McKay was a

young man herding cattle, he sought a witness, but it did not come until many years later while serving his mission in Scotland. He wrote, "It was a manifestation for which as a doubting youth I had secretly prayed . . . on hillside and in meadow. It was an assurance to me that sincere prayer is answered 'some-time, somewhere.'"²⁰

The answer may be "Not now—be patient and wait."

I testify that on the hillside or in the meadow, in the grove or closet, now or in the eternities to come, the Savior's words to each of us will be fulfilled: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."²¹ While we are commanded not to seek after signs, we are commanded to "seek . . . earnestly the best gifts."²² These gifts include the Holy Ghost and personal revelation. That revelation will come "line upon line, precept upon precept," as the Savior said, and "unto him that receiveth [the Lord] will give more."²³

Seek more of the Spirit of God

As we go forth from this conference, I call on each of us to seek more and receive more of the Spirit of God. The Savior prayed that His disciples in the New World would receive that Spirit. Then, as an example to all of us, He departed from His disciples and in prayer thanked His Heavenly Father for bestowing it.²⁴ Let us follow His example and pray for the Spirit of God, giving thanks for its marvelous blessings in our lives.

I bear my special witness that Jesus Christ lives and leads His Church through a living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. I know—I know—that President Hinckley leads this Church by revelation. In the words of Alma:

"Behold, I say unto you [these things] are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and

prayed many days. . . . And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me . . . ; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me."²⁵

That each of us may receive that Spirit, obtain the blessings of personal revelation, and know for ourselves that these things are true is my heartfelt prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Alma 8:24.
2. John 17:3.
3. See 1 Corinthians 2:11–16.
4. Quoted in Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (1884), 8.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
6. See Moses 5:4–11.
7. See Genesis 18:23–33; Exodus 3:1–3; 32:31–33; Moses 1:1–2, 24; 6:26–37; 7:2–4; Abraham 1:1–2, 15–19.
8. See 1 Kings 19:11–12.
9. See Daniel 2:16–20.
10. See Matthew 16:15–17.
11. See 1 Nephi 2:16; 11:1–2; for additional examples, see Mosiah 3:1–4; Alma 43:23; Helaman 7–8; 10:2–4; 3 Nephi 1:10–13; Mormon 8:34–35; Ether 3:1–6, 13–14, 25.
12. See Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 22; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 16.
13. See Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 68–69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 49.
14. See Acts 9; Mosiah 27; Alma 36.
15. 1 Samuel 3:10.
16. Matthew 13:16.
17. James 1:5–6.
18. Moroni 7:37.
19. Ether 12:6.
20. Quoted in Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God* (1986), 50.
21. Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9; see also 3 Nephi 14:7.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 46:8.
23. 2 Nephi 28:30.
24. See 3 Nephi 19:19–23.
25. Alma 5:46.

Elder Richard G. Scott

How to find truth

Since truth is the only meaningful foundation upon which we can make wise decisions, how then can one establish what is really true? Increasingly more people are finding that making wise decisions is becoming more and more difficult because of the ultra-interconnected world in which we live. Constantly forced into our consciousness is an incessant barrage of counsel, advice, and promotions. It is done by a bewildering array of media, Internet, and other means. On a given subject we can receive multiple strongly delivered, carefully crafted messages with solutions. But often two of the solutions can be diametrically opposed. No wonder some are confused and are not sure how to make the right decisions.

To further complicate matters, others try to persuade us that our decisions must be socially acceptable and politically correct. Some pondering of that approach will reveal how wrong it is. Since social and political structures differ widely over the world and can dramatically change with time, the folly of using that method to make choices is apparent.

There are two ways to find truth—both useful, provided we follow the laws upon which they are predicated. The first is the scientific method. It can require analysis of data to confirm a theory or, alternatively, establish a valid principle through experimentation. The scientific method is a valuable way of seeking truth. However, it has two limitations. First, we never can be sure we have identified absolute truth, though we often draw nearer and nearer to it. Second, sometimes, no matter how earnestly we apply the method, we can get the wrong answer.

The best way of finding truth is simply to go to the origin of all truth and ask or respond to inspiration.¹ For success,

two ingredients are essential: first, unwavering faith in the source of all truth; second, a willingness to keep God's commandments to keep open spiritual communication with Him. Elder Robert D. Hales has just spoken to us about that personal revelation and how to obtain it.

Scientific approach²

What have we learned from the scientific approach to discovering truth? An example will illustrate. Try as I might, I am not able, even in the smallest degree, to comprehend the extent, depth, and stunning grandeur of what our holy Heavenly Father, Elohim, has permitted to be revealed by the scientific method. If we were capable of moving outward into space, we would first see our earth as did the astronauts. Farther out, we would have a grandstand view of the sun and its orbiting planets. They would appear as a small circle of objects within an enormous panorama of glittering stars. Were we to continue the outward journey, we would have a celestial view of our Milky Way spiral, with over 100 billion stars rotating in a circular path, their orbits controlled by gravity around a concentrated central region. Beyond that, we could look toward a group of galaxies called the Virgo Cluster, which some feel includes our Milky Way, estimated to be about 50 million light-years away. Beyond that, we'd encounter galaxies 10 billion light-years away that the Hubble telescope has photographed. The dizzying enormity of that distance is suggested by noting that light travels 700 million miles an hour. Even from this extraordinary perspective there would not be the slightest evidence of approaching any limit to God the Father's creations.

As awe inspiring as this incredible view of the heavens would present, there

is another consideration equally capable of confirming the unfathomable capacities of our Father in Heaven. Were we to move in the opposite direction to explore the structure of matter, we could get a close-up view of a double helix molecule of DNA. That is the extraordinary, self-duplicating molecular structure that controls the makeup of our physical body. Further exploration would bring us to the level of an atom, composed of the protons, neutrons, and electrons we've heard about.

Were we to penetrate further into the mysteries of the most fundamental makeup of creation, we would come to the limit of our current understanding. In the last 70 years much has been learned about the structure of matter. A Standard Model of Fundamental Particles and Interactions has been developed. It is based on experimentation that has established the existence of fundamental particles designated as quarks and others called leptons. This model explains the patterns of nuclear binding and decay of matter, but it does not yet provide a successful explanation for the forces of gravity. Also, some feel that even more powerful tools than those used to acquire our current understanding of matter might reveal additional fundamental particles. So there are yet more of Father in Heaven's creations to be understood by the scientific method.

We can see the scientific method has brought about an extraordinary expansion of our understanding as the Lord has inspired gifted men who may not understand who created these things nor for what purpose. Many of these may not even recognize such inspiration or give credit to God for the origin of their contributions. I was comforted recently as President Henry B. Eyring shared an experience that his gifted father had in a meeting with other outstanding scientists. He asked them if their research indicated

the existence of a superior organizing intelligence. They all confirmed their conviction that such an intelligence exists.

Limited as it is, our understanding of our Father's creations indicates that it is mostly vacant space. Even those things we consider as solid, firm, and tangible, when viewed at enormous magnification in the heavens or in minute matter, are mostly vacant space that God, our Father, perfectly controls and uses for His exalted purposes.

Revealed truth approach

What have we learned about truth through revelation?

Centuries ago, God the Father permitted some of His prophets to view His vast creations perfectly, through the eye of the Holy Spirit. He also explained why He had created them: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."³ Enoch was one of those prophets. He observed the God of heaven weep as He saw how the power and influence of Satan had turned many on earth to evil.

Enoch declared:

"How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?

"And were it possible that man could number the . . . millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; and yet . . . thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever;

". . . And naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep?

"The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, . . . and . . . gave I unto man his agency;

"And unto thy brethren have I . . . given commandment, that they should

love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood.”⁴

Well did God the Father say unto Moses:

“Worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten. . . .

“. . . There are many worlds . . . , and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.”⁵

A knowledge of truth is of little value unless we apply it in making correct decisions. Consider for a moment a man, heavily overweight, approaching a bakery display. In his mind are these thoughts: The doctor told you not to eat any more of that. It’s not good for you. It just gives you momentary gratification of appetite. You’ll feel uncomfortable the rest of the day after it. You’ve decided not to have any more. But then he hears himself say, “I’ll have two of those almond twists and a couple of those chocolate doughnuts. One more time won’t hurt. I’ll do it just once more, and this will be the last time.”

Faith and character

The process of identifying truth sometimes necessitates enormous effort coupled with profound faith in our Father and His glorified Son. God intended that it be so to forge your character. Worthy character will strengthen your capacity to respond obediently to the direction of the Spirit as you make vital decisions. Righteous character is what you are becoming. It is more important than what you own, what you have learned, or what goals you have accomplished. It allows you to be trusted. Righteous character provides the foundation of your spiritual strength. It enables you in times of trial and testing to make difficult, extremely

important decisions correctly even when they seem overpowering.

I testify that neither Satan nor any other power can weaken or destroy your growing character. Only you can do that through disobedience.

Understand and apply this vital principle to your life: Your exercise of faith builds character. Fortified character expands your capacity to exercise greater faith. Thus, your confidence in making correct decisions is enhanced. And the strengthening cycle continues. The more your character is fortified, the more enabled you are to exercise the power of faith for yet stronger character.

Our Father and His Son

With the enormity of what we can in just the smallest way begin to understand and certainly in no way fully comprehend, how grateful we must be that this God of unfathomable capacities is our Father. He is a loving, understanding, compassionate, patient Father. He created us as His children. He treats us as a beloved son or daughter. He makes us feel loved, appreciated, valuable, and dear to Him. He has given us His plan of mercy⁶ and equipped us, when we are obedient, to make correct decisions. He has provided through His holy Son a means for us to live, to grow, to develop, and to place ourselves squarely on the path to be eternally under His guidance and influence.

I love our Father in Heaven beyond my capacity to express. In all humility, I solemnly bear witness that this creative Master of unparalleled capacities is our compassionate, holy Father. His Beloved Son laid His life down in absolute obedience to His Father to break the bonds of death and to become our Master, our Redeemer, our Savior. While I do not fully comprehend all Their capacities, I understand something of Their power to express intensely Their love. Humbly I bear

solemn witness that They live and love us.
In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Jacob 4:8.
2. For further information see *McGraw-Hill Concise Encyclopedia of Physics* (2005);
3. Moses 1:39.
4. Moses 7:29–33.
5. Moses 1:33, 35.
6. See Alma 42:31.

Philip Morrison and others, *Powers of Ten* (1982); www.particleadventure.org; and www.atlasoftheuniverse.com.

Daniel K Judd

Nourished by the good word of God

As a young man I worked with my father and brothers raising cattle and horses on our ranch in southern Utah and northern Arizona. My father taught us that when we wanted to catch one of our horses to ride, all we had to do was to put a handful of grain into a bucket and shake it for several seconds. It didn't matter if the horses were in a corral or a large field; they would come on the run to eat the grain. We could then gently slip a bridle over their heads while they were eating. I was always amazed that such a simple process worked so well.

On some occasions, when we didn't want to take the time to get the grain from the barn, we would put dirt in the bucket and shake it, attempting to trick the horses into thinking that we had grain for them to eat. When they discovered our deception, some of the horses stayed, but others would run away and be nearly impossible to catch. It often took several days to regain their trust. We learned that taking the time to consistently feed our horses grain made them much easier to work with and provided them with increased nourishment and greater strength.

Even though many years have passed since my days on the ranch, the experience I have just described has helped me as I have considered the following question: What can we as teachers and leaders in the Church do to provide increased doctrinal and spiritual nourishment for those we serve?

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught: "Most people don't come to church looking merely for a few new gospel facts or to see old friends, though all of that is important. They come seeking a spiritual experience. They want peace. They want their faith fortified and their hope renewed. They want, in short, to be nourished by the good word of God, to be strengthened by the powers of heaven. Those of us who are called on to speak or teach or lead have an obligation to help provide that, as best we possibly can."¹

Vital keys for teaching and leading

The Savior and His servants have not only taught us the importance of helping others be "nourished by the good word of God" (Moroni 6:4); they have also provided inspired direction concerning how teaching and leading can best be accomplished. Section 50 of the Doctrine and Covenants is one of many references that provide such valuable counsel. After acknowledging the concerns that existed in some of the early branches of the Church, the Savior instructed a group of leaders concerning the solution to the problems they were facing. His instructions began by asking a vital question: "Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained?" (D&C 50:13). The Lord's familiar answer follows in verse 14: "To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth."

The answers to the problems the Saints were facing in 1831 are the same for the challenges we are facing today—we are to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Teach the truths that are most important

Section 50 includes several vital keys to providing nourishment for those we teach and those we lead. The first key is found in the Savior's admonition to "preach *my* gospel" (D&C 50:14; italics added). The scriptures clearly teach that the gospel we are to preach is not the "wisdom of the world" (Mosiah 24:7) but the "doctrine of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:21). While the gospel of Jesus Christ embraces all truth, not all truths are of equal value.² The Savior clearly taught that *His* gospel, first and foremost, is His atoning sacrifice. His gospel is also an invitation to receive the blessings of the Atonement through faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring faithfully to the end.³

Just as I learned as a young man that grain was more appealing to our horses than a dirt-filled bucket, I also learned that grain was more nourishing than hay, that hay was more nourishing than straw, and that it was possible to *feed* a horse without *nourishing* him. As teachers and leaders, it is vital that we nourish those we teach and lead by focusing on the fundamental doctrines, principles, and applications emphasized in the scriptures and the words of our latter-day prophets instead of spending precious time on subjects and sources of lesser importance.

As a teacher I have learned that a class discussion focused on the Atonement of Jesus Christ is infinitely more important than discussing topics such as the precise location of the ancient city of Zarahemla in today's geography. As a leader I have learned that leadership meetings are more meaningful if our highest priority is an *integrated* effort to build

faith in Christ and strengthen families, and not simply a *correlated* calendar.

The Lord's words in section 50 contain a warning that if we teach "by some other way" than the way the Lord has directed, "it is not of God" (D&C 50:18). The Lord has taught those of us who serve in the Church to teach "none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith" (D&C 52:9). Does this mean that following the Savior's admonition to "preach my gospel" requires that every class we teach or meeting we lead be limited to teaching faith and repentance?

President Henry B. Eyring responded to a similar question by answering: "Of course not. But it does mean that the teacher and those who participate must always desire to bring the Spirit of the Lord into the hearts of the members in the room to produce faith and a determination to repent and to be clean."⁴

Teach by the Spirit

A second key to ensuring those we teach and lead are "nourished by the good word of God" (Moroni 6:4) is also found in the Savior's direction "to preach my gospel *by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth*" (D&C 50:14; italics added). Not only are the Savior's words directing us to follow the guidance of the Spirit as we prepare and as we teach; He is also teaching that *it is the Spirit that is the most effective teacher in any given situation.*

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "The Spirit of God speaking to the spirit of man has power to impart truth with greater effect and understanding than the truth can be imparted by personal contact even with heavenly beings."⁵

Several months ago I attended a training meeting where a number of General

Authorities had spoken. After commenting on the excellent instruction that had been given, Elder David A. Bednar asked the following question: “What are we learning that has not been said?” He then explained that in addition to receiving the counsel that had been given by those who had *spoken* or who would yet speak, we should also carefully listen for and record the *unspoken* impressions given by the Holy Ghost.

The following statement from our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, provides additional counsel concerning teaching by the Spirit:

“We must . . . get our teachers to speak out of their hearts rather than out of their books, to communicate their love for the Lord and this precious work, and somehow it will catch fire in the hearts of those they teach.”⁶

Nourish those we teach and lead

The Lord’s words in section 50 of the Doctrine and Covenants also provide an inspired standard by which each of us can

evaluate the effectiveness of our teaching, leading, and learning. In verse 22 we read, “Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.”

My dear brothers and sisters, with all of my heart I pray that each of us will take great care to nourish those we teach and those we lead by fortifying them with the bread of life and the living water found within the restored gospel, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 26.
2. See Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 7.
3. See 3 Nephi 27:13–22; Doctrine and Covenants 33:11–12; 39:6; 76:40–42.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 47; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 43–44.
5. *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:47–48.
6. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 619–20.

Elder Octaviano Tenorio

Power of godliness manifested in temples

My dear brothers and sisters, one of the things which I am most grateful to my Heavenly Father for is the opportunity I had to work for 15 years as recorder in the Mexico City Mexico Temple. In this sacred place, as in all temples, ordinances are performed for the living and the dead by the power of the priesthood. In 1832 the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation about the priesthood:

“And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

“Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest” (D&C 84:19–20).

I have had wonderful experiences within the walls of the temple that verify this.

Story of being sealed to parents

In 1993, after I had served as president of the Mexico Tuxtla Gutiérrez Mission, we traveled as a family to see my parents, who lived in northern Mexico. During the trip we talked about the joy of serving the Lord and seeing the change in people who had accepted the gospel

during the three years we were in the mission. We were commenting about those people who were baptized, confirmed, and had received the priesthood and the ones we knew had entered the temple and were sealed as families for eternity.

My youngest son asked a question that made me reflect: "Dad, are you sealed to your parents?" I told him that because my father had been less active for many years, he and my mother were not sealed in the temple. To help him become active, I thought up a plan. It involved my children, and I explained to them how we would do it: Every Sunday my father would get up early to take my mother and sister to church, only to return home, wait for the services to end, then go back to pick them up. So I assigned my children to go with him and say, "Grandpa, would you do us a favor?" I knew his answer would be, "Whatever you want, my children." Then they would ask him if he would go with them to church and stay with them so he could listen to their testimonies. It was the first Sunday of the month. I also knew my father would give any excuse not to go, so I planned to enter the room to help my children convince him.

The time soon came for executing the plan. My daughter, Susana, approached my father and asked him about the favor. Sure enough, my father told her he would do anything he could for them. Then came the invitation to go to church, and just as we had predicted, he used this excuse: "I can't because I haven't even showered." That's when my wife and I, who were hiding behind the door, shouted, "We'll wait for you!"

When we realized he was not making a decision, my wife and I entered the room and, together with our children, began to insist, "Shower! Shower!" Then what we expected happened. My father came with us, he stayed for the services, listened to the testimonies of my children, his heart was softened, and from

that Sunday on he never missed church. Months later, at the age of 78, he and my mother were sealed, and we, his children, were sealed to them.

I know that thanks to the power of godliness manifest in the ordinances of the temple, I can now be reunited with my parents for all eternity, even after death.

Story of daughter's birth and death

Many times we don't comprehend the meaning of the ordinances of the temple in their fulness until after we have known affliction or passed through experiences that could have been extremely sad without the knowledge of the plan of salvation.

When my wife and I had been married only a year and a half, she was ready to deliver our first baby. We had decided that she would have the baby in the Chihuahua colonies, where she had been born. At that time I was working in Mexico City, and we decided that she would be there a month ahead of the delivery date. I was planning to join her later.

The delivery date arrived. I was at work when I received a call from my father-in-law. The news was good: "Octaviano, your wife has given birth, and you now have a little daughter who is beautiful." So, in my happiness, I began to announce this to my friends and partners at work, who in turn asked me for chocolates to celebrate the birth of my little one.

The next day I began to give out chocolates throughout the four floors of our office building. When I reached the second floor, I received another call from my father-in-law. This time the news was different: "Octaviano, your wife is fine, but your daughter has passed away. The funeral will be today, and you don't have time to come. What are you going to do?"

I asked to speak with Rosa, my wife, and then asked her if she was OK. She

replied that she was fine, depending on how I was feeling. Then we talked about the plan of salvation, remembering this scripture:

“And I also beheld that all children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven” (D&C 137:10).

I asked her, “Do you believe that?” And she said, “Yes, I do.” Then I replied, “We should be happy then. I love you. And if you are OK with that, I’ll take my vacation in two weeks, spend some time with you, and return back together to Mexico.”

We knew that one day we would be reunited with our daughter because we were sealed by the power of the priesthood in the temple. We ended the telephone call, and I resumed giving out the chocolates in my office building.

Seeing me do this, one of my co-workers was surprised and asked me how I could do this after such terrible news. I answered, “If you have three hours, I can explain why I am not feeling too sad and about my knowledge of what happens after death.” He didn’t have three hours at that moment but did later. We ended up talking for four hours. He accepted the gospel and, together with his mother and brother, was baptized into the Church after receiving the discussions.

I know that thanks to the power of godliness manifested in the ordinances of the temple, I will now be able to know my daughter. I will embrace her, and we will be with her for eternity, just as we are now with our three surviving children.

Priesthood makes eternal families possible

I rejoice in the words of Malachi:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5–6).

This priesthood makes eternal families possible. It allows me, a son, to turn my heart to my father, who passed away last year, and to be calm in my hope through the Savior that I will see him again. This priesthood allows me, as a father, to turn my heart to our two children who died as infants and to be calm in my hope through the Savior that I will know them, and they will know I was their earthly father as I look into their eyes and tell them I love them. It is this priesthood which has allowed me to see, in the holiness of the temple, how the power of godliness is manifested to all people who, after exercising faith in Christ, repenting of their sins, and searching fervently for happiness, come to make sacred covenants with our Heavenly Father and receive His holy ordinances that bind on earth as well as bind in heaven.

I love temple work. I know that God lives, that Jesus Christ is my Savior, and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is a true prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Claudio D. Zivic and Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Steven E. Snow of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang
“We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Elder Claudio D. Zivic

Being more than ordinary

I have heard that no one has ever died giving a talk in a general conference. If that is the case today, I sincerely apologize.

While serving in the required military service in Argentina, I read a book whose author I do not remember. He wrote, “I choose not to be an ordinary man; it is my right to be someone out of the ordinary, if I am able.”

To be someone out of the ordinary means to be successful, unique, and outstanding.

That phrase has remained written in my mind and heart. My feelings were and are that we, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ, have chosen not to be ordinary men and women. The last words, “if I am able,” made me think that it is not enough to go through the motions of being baptized and confirmed, but rather we have to fulfill and honor the commitment that we made with the Lord on that memorable day.

Becoming free from sin

Lehi taught his son Jacob, saying: “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Undoubtedly, freedom and eternal life are what we seek. We tremble at the very thought of dying and being captives of the devil.

Nephi taught clearly what we ought to do. He said, “For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

I believe that the first thing we have to keep in mind in doing “all we can” is to repent of our sins. We will never be able to reach our divine potential if we remain in our sins.

I have fond memories of the day of my baptism when I was eight years old. It was performed in the Liniers Branch, the first chapel of the Church built in South America. After my baptism, as I was returning home along with my family, my oldest brother started wrestling with me, as he often did. I exclaimed, “Do not touch me! I cannot sin!” As the days passed, I realized that it was not possible to remain sinless for the rest of my life.

It is difficult to bear the sufferings that are inflicted upon us, but the real torment in life is to suffer the consequences of our own shortcomings and sins which we inflict upon ourselves.

There is only one way to rid ourselves of this suffering. It is by means of sincere repentance. I learned that if I could present unto the Lord a broken heart and a contrite spirit, feeling a godly sorrow for my sins, humbling myself, being repentant of my faults, He, through His miraculous atoning sacrifice, could erase those sins and remember them no more.

The Argentine poet José Hernández, in his famous book *Martín Fierro*, wrote:

A man loses a lot of things
and sometimes finds them again,
but it's my duty to inform you,
and you'll do well to remember it,
if once your sense of shame gets lost
it will never again be found.

[*La Vuelta de Martín Fierro*, part 2 of *Martín Fierro* (1879), canto 32; bilingual ed., trans. C. E. Ward (1967), 493]

If we don't experience the godly sorrow that results from our sins or unrighteous actions, it will be impossible for

us to remain on the way of outstanding people.

Doing all we can to share the gospel

Another important principle to remember in doing “all we can do” is to look for and develop the opportunities that life within the gospel constantly offers us and recognize that the Lord has given us all that we have. He is responsible for all that is good in our lives.

Another thing that must be our permanent responsibility is to do “all we can do” to share the gospel of happiness with all mankind.

Some time ago I received a letter from Brother Rafael Pérez Cisneros of Galicia, Spain, telling me about his conversion. Part of his letter said the following:

“I had no concept of the purpose of life or what the family really is. When I finally allowed the missionaries to come into my home, I told them, ‘Give me your message, but I warn you that nothing is going to make me change religions.’ On this first occasion my children and my wife were listening attentively. I felt separated from the group. I felt afraid, and without thinking I went to my bedroom. I closed the door and began to pray from the depths of my soul like I had never prayed before. ‘Father, if it is true that these young men are Your disciples and have come to help us, please make it known to me.’ It was in that very moment that I began to cry like a small child. My tears were abundant, and I felt happiness like I had never before experienced. I was absorbed in a sphere full of joy and happiness that penetrated my soul. I understood that God was answering my prayer.

“All of my family was baptized, and we had the blessing of being sealed in the Swiss Temple, making me the happiest man in the world.”

I think this story should motivate us to do “all we can do” to share the blessings of joy that come from living the gospel of happiness.

Serving the Lord until the end of our lives

The final concept I want to share is that we should do “all we can do” until the end of our mortal probation. Without question, we have living examples like President Gordon B. Hinckley and many other men and women who continue to faithfully serve at ages that others may consider inconvenient.

When I served as president of the Spain Bilbao Mission, I was impressed with the quality of members and missionaries that I met, who moved the work forward with great ability and love, as do many faithful members of the Church in other parts of the world. To all of them, I express my sincere respect and admiration.

The Lord has said He is “delight[ed] to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

“Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory” (D&C 76:5–6).

May we always have in our minds and hearts the words of Nephi: “Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. . . . My soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation” (2 Nephi 4:28, 30).

It is my humble prayer that the Lord may bless us to do “all we can do” in this “out of the ordinary” path that we have chosen, which I testify to be true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Douglas L. Callister

Gaining our own witness

Years ago a man was accused of a serious crime. The prosecution presented three witnesses, each of whom saw the man commit the crime. The defense then presented three witnesses, none of whom had seen its commission. The simple jury was confused. Based on the number of witnesses, the evidence seemed to the jury equally divided. The man was acquitted. It was irrelevant, of course, that untold millions had never seen the crime. There needed to be only one witness.

In the genius of the gospel plan, there ultimately only has to be one witness, but that witness must be you. The testimony of others may initiate and nourish the desire for faith and testimony, but eventually every individual must find out for himself. None can permanently endure on borrowed light.

The restored gospel is not truer today than when a solitary boy walked out of the Sacred Grove in 1820. Truth has never been dependent on the number who embrace it. When Joseph left the grove, there was only one person on earth who knew the truth about God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. It is necessary, however, that each find out for himself and carry that burning testimony into the next life.

Heber J. Grant's testimony

When 23-year-old Heber J. Grant was installed as president of the Tooele Stake, he told the Saints that he believed the gospel was true. President Joseph F. Smith, a counselor in the First Presidency, inquired, "Heber, you said you believe the gospel with all your heart, . . . but you did not bear your testimony that you know it is true. Don't you know absolutely that this gospel is true?"

Heber answered, "I do not." Joseph F. Smith then turned to John Taylor, the

President of the Church, and said, "I am in favor of undoing this afternoon what we did this morning. I do not think any man should preside over a stake who has not a perfect and abiding knowledge of the divinity of this work."

President Taylor replied, "Joseph, Joseph, Joseph, [Heber] knows it just as well as you do. The only thing that he does not know is that he does know it."

Within a few weeks that testimony was realized, and young Heber J. Grant shed tears of gratitude for the perfect, abiding, and absolute testimony that came into his life.¹

It is a grand thing to know—and to know that you know and that the light has not been borrowed from another.

A missionary recognizes his testimony

Years ago I presided over a mission headquartered in the Midwest. One day, with a handful of missionaries, I spoke with an esteemed representative of another Christian faith. This gentle soul spoke of his own religion's history and doctrine, eventually repeating the familiar words: "By grace ye are saved. Every man and woman must exercise faith in Christ in order to become a saved being."

Among those present was a new missionary. He was altogether unfamiliar with other religions. He had to ask the question, "But, sir, what happens to the little baby who dies before he is old enough to understand and exercise faith in Christ?" The learned man bowed his head, looked at the floor, and said, "There ought to be an exception. There ought to be a loophole. There ought to be a way, but there isn't."

The missionary looked at me and, with tears in his eyes, said, "Goodness, President, we do have the truth, don't we!"

The moment of testimony realization—when you know that you know—is sweet and sublime. That testimony, if nurtured, will rest upon you as a mantle. When we see light, we are engulfed by it. Lights of understanding turn on within.

Paying the price to know

I once conversed with a fine young man who was not of our faith, although he had attended most of our worship services for more than a year. I asked why he had not joined the Church. He replied, “Because I do not know whether it is true. I think it may well be true, but I cannot stand and testify, as you do, ‘I actually know it is true.’”

I inquired, “Have you read the Book of Mormon?” He answered that he had read in the book.

I asked whether he had prayed about the book. He answered, “I have mentioned it in my prayers.”

I told my friend that as long as he casually read and prayed, he never would find out, worlds without end. But when he set aside a period for fasting and pleading, the truth would be burned into his heart, and he would know that he knew. He said nothing more to me but told his wife the next morning that he would be fasting. The following Saturday he was baptized.

If you want to know that you know that you know, a price must be paid. And you alone must pay that price. There are proxies for ordinances but none for the acquisition of a testimony.

Alma spoke of his conversion in these beautiful words:

“I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me” (Alma 5:46).

Bearing testimony to others

When a testimony has been realized, there is a burning urge on the part of the possessor to bear that testimony to others. When Brigham Young left the waters of baptism, he said: “The spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I felt as though my bones would consume within me unless I spoke to the people. . . . The first discourse I ever delivered I occupied over an hour. I opened my mouth and the Lord filled it.”² As a fire will not burn except the flame be revealed, a testimony cannot abide except it be expressed.

Brigham Young later said of Orson Pratt, “If Brother Orson [were] chopped up in inch pieces, each piece would cry out, ‘Mormonism [is] true.’”³ Father Lehi eulogized his noble son Nephi in these words: “But behold, it was not he, but it was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it” (2 Nephi 1:27).

The opportunity and responsibility for testimony bearing exist first in the family setting. Our children should be able to remember the light in our eyes, the ring of our testimonies in their ears, and the feeling in their hearts as we bear witness to our most precious audience that Jesus was truly God’s own Son and Joseph was His prophet. Our posterity must know that we know, because we oft tell them.

Early Church leaders paid a great price to establish this dispensation. Perhaps we will meet them in the next life and listen to their witness. When we are called upon to testify, what will we say? There will be spiritual infants and spiritual giants in the next life. Eternity is a long time to live without light, especially if our spouses and descendants also live in darkness because there was no light within us, and others, therefore, could not light their lamps.

Plead in prayer to keep testimony strong

We should be on our knees every morning and night pleading with the Lord that we never lose our faith, our testimony, or our virtue. There only has to be one witness, but it must be yourself.

I have a testimony. It urges to be expressed. I bear witness that the power of the living God is in this Church. I know

what I know, and my witness is true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 191–93.
2. In *Deseret News*, Aug. 3, 1870, 306.
3. President Brigham Young's Office Journal, Oct. 1, 1860, Brigham Young Office Files, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; punctuation and capitalization modernized.

Elder Steven E. Snow

Tribute to mother's service

President David O. McKay once quoted Abraham Lincoln as saying, "All that I am or hope to be I owe to my angel mother."¹ These words well explain my feelings about my own mother. Viola Jean Goates Snow—Jeanie to all who knew her—was born in 1929 and died shortly after her 60th birthday in 1989. She taught me and encouraged me. She truly convinced me I could accomplish anything I wanted. She also disciplined me. As my own sons say of their mother, "She was the travel agent for guilt trips." Mom was a wonderful mother, a great role model, and scarcely a day passes I do not think of her and miss her.

A few years before she passed away, she was diagnosed with cancer, a disease she fought with great courage. As a family we learned, strangely enough, that cancer is a disease of love. It provides opportunities to mend fences, say good-byes, and express love. A few weeks before my mother's death, we were visiting in the family room of my boyhood home. Mom had fine taste and liked nice things. She also longed to travel, but our family lived on a modest budget, and these dreams were not quite realized. Knowing this, I asked her if she had any regrets. I fully

expected to hear she had always wanted a larger, more beautiful home or perhaps an expression of sadness and disappointment over never having traveled. She pondered my question for a few moments and replied simply, "I wish I had served more."

I was shocked at her response. My mother had always accepted Church callings. She served as ward Relief Society president, Sunday School teacher, visiting teacher, and in the Primary. As children we were always delivering casseroles, jam, and bottled fruit to neighbors and members of the ward. When I reminded her of all this, she was undeterred. "I could have done more" was all she said.

Actively look for opportunities to serve

My mother had lived an exemplary and full life. She was loved by family and friends. She had accomplished much in a life that was often hard and which was cut short by disease and sickness. In spite of all of this, her greatest regret was she had not given enough service. Now, I have no doubt my mother's earthly sacrifice has been accepted by the Lord and that she has been welcomed by Him. But why was it foremost in her mind just

days before her passing? What is service, and why is it so important in the gospel of Jesus Christ?

First, we are commanded to serve one another. The first commandment is to love God. “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”²

We demonstrate our love when we help and serve each other.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: “No man can be a true Latter-day Saint who is unneighborly, who does not reach out to assist and help others. It is inherent in the very nature of the gospel that we do so. My brothers and sisters, we cannot live unto ourselves.”³

The Savior taught His disciples this important principle in Matthew:

“Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”⁴

This service is to be given unselfishly, with no thought of personal gain or reward. It is to be given as needed, not just when convenient. Opportunities to serve may not always seem obvious, as it is human nature to worry about our own wants and needs. We must resist such tendencies and look for opportunities to serve. When we visit with those who are suffering from sickness, loss of loved ones, or other heartbreak, it is not enough to simply say, “Call if there is anything I can do.” Rather, look for ways to bless the lives of others through seemingly simple acts of service. It is better to do even things of little consequence than to do nothing at all.

Bless others through Church service

Second, we have an obligation as members of the Church to accept callings to serve in building the kingdom of God on earth. As we serve in our various callings, we bless the lives of others. In missionary work, lives are changed as people learn of the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive a testimony of its truth. By the sacred work in the temple we bless the lives of those who have gone on before us. In gospel service we have the privilege to teach others, to strengthen the youth, and to bless the lives of the little children as they learn the simple truths of the gospel. In Church service we learn to give of ourselves and to help others.

President Spencer W. Kimball, a great example of service, said: “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other in the kingdom.”⁵ The responsibility of service in the Church, however, does not relieve us of our responsibility to serve our families and our neighbors. President Kimball went on to warn:

“None of us should become so busy in our formal Church assignments that there is no room left for quiet Christian service to our neighbors.”⁶

Bless others through community service

Finally, we have a responsibility to render service in our communities. We should work to improve our neighborhoods, our schools, our cities, and our towns. I commend those in our midst who, regardless of their political persuasion, work within our local, state, and national governments to improve our lives. Likewise, I commend those who volunteer their time and resources to support worthy community and charitable causes, which bless the lives of others and make the world a better place. My grandfather

taught me at an early age, “The public service we render is the rent we pay for our place on earth.”

A boy shares a piece of candy

Service requires unselfishness, sharing, and giving. My wife and I learned a valuable lesson during our time of service in Africa. We were assigned to a district conference in Jinja, Uganda. Early Saturday morning before our meetings began, we took the opportunity to tour a new chapel in the area. As we arrived at the building, we were greeted by a young boy of three to four years of age. He had come to the Church grounds to see what was going on. Struck by his broad smile, Sister Snow reached into her purse and handed him a wrapped piece of hard butterscotch candy. He was delighted.

We spent a few minutes touring the chapel before returning outside. We were met by more than a dozen smiling children who each wanted to meet the new neighborhood candy lady.

Phyllis was heartbroken, as she had given the boy her last piece of candy. She disappointedly gestured to the children there was no more. The small boy who initially greeted us then handed the candy back to Sister Snow, gesturing for her to unwrap it. With a heavy heart, Phyllis

did so, fully expecting the boy to pop the butterscotch candy into his mouth in full view of his envious friends.

Instead, to our great surprise, he went to each of his friends, who stuck out their tongues and received one delicious lick of the butterscotch candy. The young boy continued around the circle, occasionally taking his own lick, until the candy was gone.

Now, one can argue the lack of sanitation with this gesture of sharing, but no one can dispute the example set by this young boy. Unselfishness, sharing, and giving are essential to service. This child learned that lesson well.

It is my hope and prayer that we can all do more in giving service. If we fail to serve, we fail to receive the fulness of the privileges and blessings of the restored gospel. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Pathways to Happiness*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay (1957), 183.
2. Matthew 22:39.
3. “Latter-day Prophets Speak: Service,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 49.
4. Matthew 25:37–40.
5. “Small Acts of Service,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1974, 5.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1976, 71; or *Ensign*, May 1976, 47.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Good, better, best

Most of us have more things expected of us than we can possibly do. As breadwinners, as parents, as Church workers and members, we face many choices on what we will do with our time and other resources.

We should begin by recognizing the reality that just because something is *good* is not a sufficient reason for doing

it. The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives.

Jesus taught this principle in the home of Martha. While she was “cumbered about much serving” (Luke 10:40), her sister, Mary, “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word” (v. 39). When Martha complained that her sister had left her

to serve alone, Jesus commended Martha for what she was doing (v. 41) but taught her that “one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (v. 42). It was praiseworthy for Martha to be “careful and troubled about many things” (v. 41), but learning the gospel from the Master Teacher was more “needful.” The scriptures contain other teachings that some things are more blessed than others (see Acts 20:35; Alma 32:14–15).

A childhood experience introduced me to the idea that some choices are good but others are better. I lived for two years on a farm. We rarely went to town. Our Christmas shopping was done in the Sears, Roebuck catalog. I spent hours poring over its pages. For the rural families of that day, catalog pages were like the shopping mall or the Internet of our time.

Something about some displays of merchandise in the catalog fixed itself in my mind. There were three degrees of quality: good, better, and best. For example, some men’s shoes were labeled *good* (\$1.84), some *better* (\$2.98), and some *best* (\$3.45).¹

As we consider various choices, we should remember that it is not enough that something is good. Other choices are better, and still others are best. Even though a particular choice is more costly, its far greater value may make it the best choice of all.

Consider how we use our time in the choices we make in viewing television, playing video games, surfing the Internet, or reading books or magazines. Of course it is good to view wholesome entertainment or to obtain interesting information. But not everything of that sort is worth the portion of our life we give to obtain it. Some things are better, and others are best. When the Lord told us to seek learning, He said, “Seek ye out of the *best* books words of wisdom” (D&C 88:118; *italics added*).

Choosing the best for the family

Some of our most important choices concern family activities. Many breadwinners worry that their occupations leave too little time for their families. There is no easy formula for that contest of priorities. However, I have never known of a man who looked back on his working life and said, “I just didn’t spend enough time with my job.”

In choosing how we spend time as a family, we should be careful not to exhaust our available time on things that are merely good and leave little time for that which is better or best. A friend took his young family on a series of summer vacation trips, including visits to memorable historic sites. At the end of the summer he asked his teenage son which of these good summer activities he enjoyed most. The father learned from the reply, and so did those he told of it. “The thing I liked best this summer,” the boy said, “was the night you and I laid on the lawn and looked at the stars and talked.” Super family activities may be good for children, but they are not always better than one-on-one time with a loving parent.

The amount of children-and-parent time absorbed in the good activities of private lessons, team sports, and other school and club activities also needs to be carefully regulated. Otherwise, children will be overscheduled, and parents will be frazzled and frustrated. Parents should act to preserve time for family prayer, family scripture study, family home evening, and the other precious togetherness and individual one-on-one time that binds a family together and fixes children’s values on things of eternal worth. Parents should teach gospel priorities through what they do with their children.

Family experts have warned against what they call “the overscheduling of children.” In the last generation, children

are far busier and families spend far less time together. Among many measures of this disturbing trend are the reports that structured sports time has doubled, but children's free time has declined by 12 hours per week, and unstructured outdoor activities have fallen by 50 percent.²

The number of those who report that their "whole family usually eats dinner together" has declined 33 percent. This is most concerning because the time a family spends together "eating meals at home [is] the strongest predictor of children's academic achievement and psychological adjustment."³ Family mealtimes have also been shown to be a strong bulwark against children's smoking, drinking, or using drugs.⁴ There is inspired wisdom in this advice to parents: what your children really want for dinner is you.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has pleaded that we "work at our responsibility as parents as if everything in life counted on it, because in fact everything in life does count on it."

He continued: "I ask you men, particularly, to pause and take stock of yourselves as husbands and fathers and heads of households. Pray for guidance, for help, for direction, and then follow the whisperings of the Spirit to guide you in the most serious of all responsibilities, for the consequences of your leadership in your home will be eternal and everlasting."⁵

The First Presidency has called on parents "to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles. . . . The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place . . . in . . . this God-given responsibility." The First Presidency has declared that "however worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform."⁶

Choosing the best in Church activities

Church leaders should be aware that Church meetings and activities can become too complex and burdensome if a ward or a stake tries to have the membership do everything that is good and possible in our numerous Church programs. Priorities are needed there also.

Members of the Quorum of the Twelve have stressed the importance of exercising inspired judgment in Church programs and activities. Elder L. Tom Perry taught this principle in our first worldwide leadership training meeting in 2003. Counseling the same leaders in 2004, Elder Richard G. Scott said:

"Adjust your activities to be consistent with your local conditions and resources. . . . Make sure that the essential needs are met, but do not go overboard in creating so many good things to do that the essential ones are not accomplished. . . . Remember, don't magnify the work to be done—simplify it."⁷

In general conference last year, Elder M. Russell Ballard warned against the deterioration of family relationships that can result when we spend excess time on ineffective activities that yield little spiritual sustenance. He cautioned against complicating our Church service "with needless frills and embellishments that occupy too much time, cost too much money, and sap too much energy. . . . The instruction to magnify our callings is not a command to embellish and complicate them. To innovate does not necessarily mean to expand; very often it means to simplify. . . . What is most important in our Church responsibilities," he said, "is not the statistics that are reported or the meetings that are held but whether or not individual people—ministered to one at a time just as the Savior did—have been lifted and encouraged and ultimately changed."⁸

Stake presidencies and bishoprics need to exercise their authority to weed

out the excessive and ineffective busyness that is sometimes required of the members of their stakes or wards. Church programs should focus on what is best (most effective) in achieving their assigned purposes without unduly infringing on the time families need for their “divinely appointed duties.”

But here is a caution for families. Suppose Church leaders reduce the time required by Church meetings and activities in order to increase the time available for families to be together. This will not achieve its intended purpose unless individual family members—especially parents—vigorously act to increase family togetherness and one-on-one time. Team sports and technology toys like video games and the Internet are already winning away the time of our children and youth. Surfing the Internet is not better than serving the Lord or strengthening the family. Some young men and women are skipping Church youth activities or cutting family time in order to participate in soccer leagues or to pursue various entertainments. Some young people are amusing themselves to death—spiritual death.

Some uses of individual and family time are better, and others are best. We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families.

Best home teaching, visiting teaching

Here are some other illustrations of good, better, and best:

It is *good* to belong to our Father in Heaven’s true Church and to keep all of His commandments and fulfill all of our duties. But if this is to qualify as *best*, it should be done with love and without arrogance. We should, as we sing in a great hymn, “crown [our] good with brotherhood,”⁹ showing love and concern for all whom our lives affect.

To our hundreds of thousands of home teachers and visiting teachers, I suggest that it is *good* to visit our assigned families; it is *better* to have a brief visit in which we teach doctrine and principle; and it is *best* of all to make a difference in the lives of some of those we visit. That same challenge applies to the many meetings we hold—it’s *good* to hold a meeting, *better* to teach a principle, but *best* to actually improve lives as a result of the meeting.

Best gospel teaching

As we approach 2008 and a new course of study in our Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies, I renew our caution about how we use the *Teachings of Presidents of the Church* manuals. Many years of inspired work have produced our 2008 volume of the teachings of Joseph Smith, the founding prophet of this dispensation. This is a landmark among Church books. In the past, some teachers have given a chapter of the *Teachings* manuals no more than a brief mention and then substituted a lesson of their own choice. It may have been a good lesson, but this is not an acceptable practice. A gospel teacher is called to teach the subject specified from the inspired materials provided. The best thing a teacher can do with *Teachings: Joseph Smith* is to select and quote from the words of the Prophet on principles that are specially suited to the needs of class members and then direct a class discussion on how to apply those principles in the circumstances of their lives.

I testify of our Heavenly Father, whose children we are and whose plan is designed to qualify us for “eternal life, . . . the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7; see also D&C 76:51–59). I testify of Jesus Christ, whose Atonement makes it possible. And I testify that we are led by prophets—our President, Gordon B. Hinckley, and his counselors—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalog, fall and winter 1944–45, 316E.
2. See Jared R. Anderson and William J. Doherty, “Democratic Community Initiatives: The Case of Overscheduled Children,” *Family Relations*, Dec. 2005, 655.
3. Anderson and Doherty, *Family Relations*, Dec. 2005, 655.
4. See Nancy Gibbs, “The Magic of the Family Meal,” *Time*, June 12, 2006, 51–52; see also Sarah Jane Weaver, “Family Dinner,” *Church News*, Sept. 8, 2007, 5.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 109–10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 100.
6. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; printed in *Church News*, Feb. 27, 1999, 3.
7. “The Doctrinal Foundation of the Auxiliaries,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 5, 7–8; see also *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 62, 67.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 17, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 18–20.
9. “America the Beautiful,” *Hymns*, no. 338.

President Monson

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the Young Women choir, and the father-and-son choir and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend thanks to all who participated in any way in these proceedings.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following his remarks, the choir will favor us with “Sing We Now at Parting.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Paul K. Sybrowsky of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A magnificent conference

My beloved brothers and sisters, we now conclude a great conference. We have been edified, uplifted. We have been inspired and lifted to a higher appreciation of this wonderful gospel. The music, the spoken word, and the prayers have all been magnificent.

We now return to our homes. If we are driving, let us be careful. Let no tragedy mar the experience we have enjoyed.

All of the proceedings of this conference will appear in a subsequent issue of the *Ensign* and *Liahona*. We encourage you again to read the talks in your family home evenings and discuss them together as families. They are the products of much

prayer and meditation and are well worthy of careful consideration.

Now the conference is adjourned for six months. We look forward to seeing you again next April. I’m 97, but I hope I’m going to make it. May the blessings of heaven attend you in the meantime as our humble and sincere prayer in the name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “Sing We Now at Parting.”

Elder Paul K. Sybrowsky offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Andrew Unsworth were the organists.

A Young Women choir from stakes in Mapleton and Springville, Utah, provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Manu Harris directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

A father-and-son choir from stakes in Centerville, Bountiful, and West Boun-

tiful, Utah, provided music for the priesthood session. Stephen P. Shank directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

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